Sexual Exploitation of Youth in British Columbia

Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Prostitution and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth

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Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
Main entry under title:
Sexual exploitation of youth in British Columbia

Includes bibliographical references: p. III.37
ISBN 0-7726-4361-X

1. Teenage prostitution - British Columbia. 2. Sexually abused teenagers - British Columbia. I. British Columbia. Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Prostitution and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth.
II. British Columbia. Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors.

HQ149.B7S49 2000 363.440835 C00-960303-4

Introduction

Under the guidance of a steering committee of the Working Group of the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Prostitution and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth, the Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors contracted to produce three reports:

1. Background and Summary;
2. Jurisdictional Scan; and
3. Literature Review and Consultations with Aboriginal Agencies;

The purpose of the three-part project was to provide:

- a summary of current academic literature on youth sexual exploitation in the areas of prevention, intervention and exiting; and
- an assessment of the scope of the problem in British Columbia in terms of youth involvement, exiting supports and programs, and service gaps and needs.

Particular attention was given to the involvement of Aboriginal youth; while the Literature Review revealed little in this regard, anecdotal information indicated that Aboriginal youth are disproportionately involved in the sex trade in various parts of British Columbia, and that the underlying issues differ in some significant ways from those relating to non-Aboriginal youth. A four-member team including two Aboriginal members conducted the Literature Review and Consultations with Aboriginal Agencies and wrote the Background Summary document, and a separate two-member team conducted the Jurisdictional Scan.

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Sexual Exploitation of Youth in British Columbia

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND

Provincial and municipal governments in British Columbia have been increasingly concerned about the sexual exploitation of youth. The extent of the problem has become more apparent, not exclusively in large urban centres, from information provided by youth, those working with youth and media reports that increase public awareness.

The provincial government has undertaken a number of initiatives to address the problem, some in collaboration with municipal governments. Provincial initiatives include the Provincial Prostitution Unit[1] in the Ministry of the Attorney General; the Assistant Deputy Ministers' (ADMs') Committee on Prostitution and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth; and the support of Community Action Teams[2] in a number of communities across the province regarding the sexual exploitation of children and youth. An interministry working group of the ADMs' Committee on Prostitution and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth identified the need for multi-level strategies to address the problem. Effective strategies would be expected to prevent the further exploitation of youth, address the crisis needs of youth already working in the sex trade, reduce the health and other risks, and provide community supports to help youth exit the sex trade.

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORTS

The reports summarized here include a literature review, a jurisdictional scan and consultations with Aboriginal[3] agencies. They were prepared for the Ministry of Health in early 1999, in consultation with the above-mentioned working group. The purpose of the three-part project was to provide a summary of current academic literature on youth sexual exploitation in the areas of prevention, intervention and exiting; and an assessment of the scope of the problem in British Columbia in terms of youth involvement, existing supports and programs, and service gaps and needs. Particular attention was given to the involvement of Aboriginal youth, because anecdotal information indicated that they were disproportionately involved in various parts of B.C., and that the underlying issues differed in some significant ways from those relating to non-Aboriginal youth. A four-member team including two Aboriginal members conducted the literature review and consultations with Aboriginal agencies; a separate two-member team conducted the jurisdictional scan.

The reports will be of interest to policy makers at all levels of government who are concerned with determining future directions for addressing the problem of youth sexual exploitation. Those involved with program development and delivery at the community level should equally find that the reports offer some useful directions for communities seeking to prevent additional youth from becoming exploited, and to provide the supports and programs that will support youth in making healthy choices.

The report of the consultations with Aboriginal agencies is expected to be of particular interest to those working with Aboriginal youth in both urban and reserve settings, by identifying the particular factors associated with Aboriginal youth sexual exploitation.

1 The Provincial Prostitution Unit is an integrated approach to child and youth sexual exploitation and prostitution related issues. The Unit is a team of three police officers (from the Vancouver Police Department and the RCMP), Crown counsel, a Community Coordinator, and a social worker from the Ministry for Children and Families.

2 Community Action Teams are community groups comprised of community leaders, police, teachers, social workers, parents, youth-serving agencies and others working to develop prevention, education, and social intervention strategies to address youth sexual exploitation and prostitution in their community.

3 For the purpose of these documents, the term "Aboriginal" includes all Aboriginal peoples described in Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

3. SUMMARY OF THE REPORTS

A. Literature Review

Methodology

Literature reviewed for the report was provided by the project's steering committee, with additional information obtained through an electronic search of academic journal indices for English-language research published since 1977. Material from countries whose social and cultural context differs significantly from Canada's was excluded. Some selection was also made from the very extensive range of issues covered to synthesize the major factors and concerns that arise in the literature.

State of the Research

A large body of research on sexually exploited youth has accumulated over the past couple of decades, and Canada has been a major contributor in research and in international initiatives to address the problem. The majority of research has focused on identifying the individual background factors of young people who become involved in prostitution. There is also a substantial body of research describing the experiences of youth who engage in commercial sex and the risks they face. While there is widespread recognition that structural factors such as poverty and youth unemployment play a major role in youth entry into commercial sex, there is very little research that empirically investigates this relationship. Another significant absence in the literature is research on Aboriginal youth sexual exploitation.

The contribution of research to our understanding of youth sexual exploitation is limited by the conceptual and methodological problems of much of the research. Problems include the absence of a theoretical basis for the research, poor definitions, faulty sample selection and data gathering techniques, and a lack of gender-specific data. Explanations generally focus on individual and family-related factors and often draw simplistic conclusions about cause and effect, although more recent research has introduced a structural perspective, such as a feminist gender inequity analysis. A coherent theoretical framework combining individual and sociological factors has not been developed.

Findings

Research provides strong evidence that sexually exploited youth are likely to: come from economically disadvantaged, multi-problem families; have been abused sexually and physically as children; and have left school and home at an early age. Youth who leave home at an early age with little education are at risk of living on the street and, through economic need and association with other street youth, may turn to prostitution as a means of survival. Many of these youth become immersed in a subculture in which drug misuse is common. For many, drug dependency and the means to obtain drugs through trading sex become reasons for remaining involved in prostitution, and prevent them from being able to genuinely consider an alternative future.

A predominant research theme has been the high incidence of early sexual abuse among sexually exploited youth and whether there is a causal relationship. There appears to be consensus that sexual abuse is a primary reason for running away from home, but that it is turning to the street that leads to involvement in prostitution. At the same time, the psychological effects of early sexual abuse make youth vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Research on the circumstances of prostitution indicates a high incidence of physical and sexual violence, and serious risks to physical and emotional health. Substance misuse is common, and intravenous drug misuse, especially, carries additional serious health and safety risks.

There is evidence of significant gender differences between the reasons for entry and the risks associated with prostitution. Gender differences indicate the need for services that understand and respond appropriately to these differences.

Gaps in the knowledge base about sexually exploited youth include information about ethnicity and other marginalizing factors in relation to entry, and the experience of prostitution itself; some attention has been given to lesbian and gay youth. A fundamental knowledge gap about the number of sexually exploited youth and the numbers of youth working in different venues affects service response.

Recent youth consultations with Canadian sexually exploited youth indicate that youth want and have need of a wide range

of supports and services while they are involved, and that they need long-term practical and emotional support to be able to consider and initiate the changes to their life that will enable them to successfully exit.

Almost no information has been published in the literature about programs developed to serve sexually exploited youth, what services are offered, and whether they are effective. What is known from consultations with youth is that there is widespread reluctance to use existing services, because of past negative experiences with service providers and fear of harassment and judgment.

It should be stated that while the literature may have neglected focus on the role of pimps in youth sexual exploitation, their role should not be diminished. Many youth are lured into prostitution by pimps (often referred to as a "boyfriend") and are forced to stay in the sex trade because of drug dependency and/or retaliation from a pimp. These dynamics need to be considered when reviewing much of the literature.

Information provided by sexually exploited youth and in the literature provides some guidance in terms of recommended approaches to the provision of services for sexually exploited youth. These include services that are designed for youth, to meet their particular needs and circumstances; a multi-service agency approach; youth involvement in program development; peer support; and a continuum of services to meet the needs of sexually exploited youth during involvement and through the process of exiting and reintegration.

B. Jurisdictional Scan on the Sexual Exploitation of Youth

Methodology

A jurisdictional scan was conducted through interviews with key service representatives in nine communities across B.C. A number of the selected communities already offer services related to youth sexual exploitation or had identified the problem as a concern in their community; other communities were selected to ensure overall geographic and economic representation. The communities selected were Burnaby, Dawson Creek, Kamloops, Kelowna, Port Hardy, Prince George, Vancouver, Victoria and Whistler. Service representatives interviewed included public health nurses, youth outreach workers, social workers, police and city councilors.

The semi-structured interview format comprised 10 open-ended questions. Development of the questions was guided in part by representatives from various ministries. A total of 37 interviews were conducted, four of them face-to-face and the remainder by telephone.

While the selection of communities was designed to include a broad representation of B.C. communities, it cannot be assumed that the information obtained can be generalized to all communities. In order to obtain a reliable picture of the communities, criteria for key informant selection included knowledge of the community, direct involvement with youth, or a policy/decision-making role. Similarly, the information obtained does not necessarily present a complete account of youth sexual exploitation in the community.

Findings

Sexual exploitation of youth was reported to be a problem in seven of the nine communities that participated in the jurisdictional scan. In one community, informants reported that while it did occur, it primarily involved the exchange of sex for alcohol and drugs and that there were other more serious problems involving youth. In another community, it was not considered to be an issue.

While the extent of the problem was viewed as serious in the majority of communities, the number of youth involved can not be reliably determined. Most youth were reported to be females between the ages of 15 and 18 years, although some were as young as 10 or even younger. There were also reports of male youth involvement, but their numbers were estimated to be few and less visible.

Informants consistently reported that, while sexually exploited youth and youth at risk of sexual exploitation came from every class, the majority were from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes. Factors associated with sexually exploited youth were: social isolation; low self-esteem; a dysfunctional family life where violence, substance misuse and neglect were common; early sexual abuse or other traumatizing experience; dropping out of school; and hidden disabilities, including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Involved youth were reported to often have a history of being under

provincial care—in a foster or group home, or living on their own. It was noted that youth from well-functioning families might leave home after a traumatic event and become at risk of sexual exploitation once on the street.

Reports on the ethnicity of sexually exploited youth varied across communities, with the greatest range in Vancouver and Burnaby, including Asian girls working in massage parlours. Aboriginal youth were estimated to be over-represented, in some communities comprising up to 65 per cent of sexually exploited youth.

It was estimated that in the larger urban centres, from 20 per cent to 50 per cent of the youth sex trade took place on the street; other venues included massage parlours, karaoke bars and trick pads. Escort agencies were reported not to hire under-age workers.

In smaller communities, youth sexual exploitation was less visible and sometimes completely invisible to all but those directly involved and well-informed professionals. A wide range of venues was reported, including private homes, public docks, back alleys, parks, truck stops and fishing boats.

The majority of youth were reported to become involved through their family, community or lifestyle, and intergenerational involvement in the sex trade was reported to be common. Increasingly, older girls were also luring young girls into the trade. Only small proportions of youth, primarily in urban settings, were controlled by a pimp. Pimp-related recruitment occurred in both unsupervised and supervised settings—anywhere youth tended to gather. Distinct subcultures in the sex trade are emerging in the urban areas, including the trafficking of Vietnamese girls in the Vietnamese community in Vancouver, the trafficking of Sikh girls between Vancouver-area locations, and a trafficking circuit among cities in western U.S. and Canada.

All communities scanned had a variety of youth services and public health services, but there was no consistent approach across communities to address the problem of youth sexual exploitation. All communities had a Community Action Team or some form of child and youth community advisory committee, but the mandate and agency involvement varied across communities, and inadequate budgets and resources were reported by some respondents as a barrier to effective action. Prince George had established a committee with broad representation and youth input to coordinate all youth services, and this had streamlined priority setting and budget allocation.

Informants described problems in current approaches, including inflexible bureaucratic rules and a slow, ineffective criminal justice system. A number of service needs were identified, such as increased outreach staff, youth addiction treatment services, residential mental health facilities, and safe housing for sexually exploited youth.

Informants called for a multi-dimensional approach to prevention, with youth involvement, public-private partnerships, and recognition of community-wide responsibility. Prevention strategies proposed by respondents included awareness programs at both the school and community levels, and a range of youth services and community activities that address the underlying factors that place youth at risk of sexual exploitation.

C. Consultations with Aboriginal Agencies

Intergenerational social issues are a significant factor in Aboriginal involvement in prostitution. The residential school policy and related systems created an environment in which various forms of abuse were the norm. As a result, Aboriginal children who were subjected to these institutionalized settings frequently perpetuated these abuses and negative coping skills in subsequent generations. This report attempts to promote an understanding of the complexities involved in dealing with the resulting social and health issues that burden Aboriginal communities.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with eight informants in five communities. Informants were identified by the Aboriginal team members, drawing on their knowledge of Aboriginal community members involved with Aboriginal youth programs in selected B.C. communities. During the planning stage, preliminary contact was made with over 40 potential informants, but interviews were not conducted with many of them because of unavailability at the time of the planned interview, together with lack of project resources to make further contact. Interviews were conducted in Nanaimo, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Vancouver and Victoria;

separate interviews with Aboriginal respondents in Kelowna and Prince George by the Ministry of the Attorney General provided supplementary data.

The interview was semi-structured and guided by a 12-item, open-ended questionnaire (see the Appendix in the main report). The questionnaire was a modified version of an instrument developed in part by various ministry representatives.

Interviews were conducted by the Aboriginal members of the project team, and all but one were by telephone. The informants included staff from programs providing direct services to Aboriginal youth, program directors at two Native Friendship Centres, and a Reconnect worker. Two of the informants were members of their local Community Action Team.

As with the jurisdictional scan, it should be kept in mind that the data obtained are not necessarily exhaustive, or representative of all Aboriginal communities in B.C.

Findings

Estimates of the number of Aboriginal sexually exploited youth in B.C. ranged from 14 per cent to 60 per cent depending on the community consulted, supporting other assessments that they are over-represented in the sexually exploited youth population. Explanations for the range of estimates include regional and seasonal variability, the invisibility of the activity, and the incomplete state of knowledge about youth involvement.

Informants generally reported the average age of Aboriginal sexually exploited youth as 15, although most also noted that the age at entry is getting younger and as young as 11 in some communities. There was also consensus that the vast majority of youth are female, although it was also noted, consistent with the literature and the jurisdictional scan, that sexually exploited boys are not as visible. Exploited youth come from reserves, rural communities and urban areas. Many were attracted to the big city as an escape from family dysfunction at home and drawn by unfulfilled hopes of employment. The resulting isolation, culture shock and poverty, together with substance addiction, left them especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

The street was the most common venue where sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth took place, although one informant noted that cell phones and pagers enable young sex workers to work "anywhere." Informants noted that some young Aboriginal girls are trafficked between cities in Canada and the United States. In one northern coastal community, young girls reportedly went out on commercial fishing and freight boats where they were sexually exploited.

Informants commonly described the risk factors for youth sexual exploitation as early physical and sexual abuse, which often led to substance misuse and leaving home. Because other means of earning money were non-existent, Aboriginal youth turned to the sex trade to pay for their substance addiction. Mention was also made of generational poverty, familial substance misuse and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects.

Aboriginal youth were reported to be at greater risk for recruitment into sexual exploitation for several reasons: a higher prevalence of risk factors in Aboriginal communities; the impact on youth and families of the major transitions that Aboriginal people are currently experiencing; higher rates of structural factors including poverty and unemployment among Aboriginal people; disconnection from culture and community; and the scarcity of resources and programs for Aboriginal youth.

Prevention-related resources and services for Aboriginal youth varied widely across communities, ranging from life skills programs, detox services, peer counseling and recreation programs to no services at all for older youth. Informants noted that services were usually crisis-oriented and that there was a need for programs that address the risk factors and underlying problems leading to Aboriginal youth sexual exploitation, and provide a comprehensive support network for youth who are already sexually exploited.

Informants proposed a number of principles to guide the development and delivery of programs to assist sexually exploited Aboriginal youth and support them in exiting. These were similar, for the most part, to prevention and intervention strategies identified in the literature, and included youth involvement, emphasis on cultural reconnection and renewal, a focus on education and skill development, and commitments to peer support and inter-service collaboration.

A summary of some the notable findings in the three reports is provided on pages I.6 and I.7 in tabular form.

4. Summary of Selected Findings on the Sexual Exploitation of Youth

LITERATURE REVIEW	JURISDICTIONAL SCAN	ABORIGINAL AGENCY CONSULTATIONS
SEX AND AGE Estimates indicate that up to 80 per cent are female. Entry is in mid-teenage years, although, increasingly, many are younger. Females tend to be younger than males at entry, and remain involved for a longer period.	**SEX AND AGE** Majority are females between 15 and 18 years, although some are aged 10 to 12 or even younger. Males not as visible; dynamics are different than for females.	**SEX AND AGE** Average age was 15, but some as young as 11. Vast majority are female; male youth less visible.
ETHNICITY Over-representation of Aboriginal youth. Literature provides little information on ethnicity.	**ETHNICITY** Over-representation of Aboriginal youth. Organized inter-city trafficking in girls from various ethnic backgrounds.	**ETHNICITY** Over-representation of Aboriginal youth.
RISK FACTORS Poverty (and increasing feminization of poverty); youth unemployment/ homelessness; gender inequity; socio-economic marginalization. Childhood sexual abuse; dysfunctional family (violence, neglect, substance misuse); leaving home at an early age; dropping out of school; drug misuse. Gay/lesbian youth more at risk because of social isolation.	**RISK FACTORS** Isolation/lack of family-social bonds; low self-esteem; early sexual abuse (especially for females) or other violation or trauma; socioeconomically disadvantaged homes; intergenerational involvement; school problems/dropping out; hidden disabilities such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.	**RISK FACTORS** Childhood sexual and/or physical abuse leading to alcohol and drug misuse to dull pain, then leaving home; substance addiction and selling sex as means of paying for habit; generational poverty; familial substance misuse; lack of self-esteem; disconnection from culture and community; paucity of Aboriginal youth programs on reserve and in urban areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW	JURISDICTIONAL SCAN	ABORIGINAL AGENCY CONSULTATIONS
RISKS OF SEX TRADE Drug misuse; physical and sexual violence; sexually transmitted diseases; pregnancy (and resulting violence by johns and pimps); pelvic disorders for females; emotional and mental health problems.	**RISKS OF SEX TRADE** This issue was not canvassed with informants.	**RISKS OF SEX TRADE** This issue was not specifically canvassed in consultations; mention of violence by racist johns.
EXISTING SERVICE/ PROGRAM DELIVERY Literature contains almost no research on services. A few examples are cited in the review.	**EXISTING SERVICE/ PROGRAM DELIVERY** Range of outreach, health and recreational services, but not specifically for sexually exploited youth; some communities have youth housing; Community Action Team or youth community advisory committee.	**EXISTING SERVICE/ PROGRAM DELIVERY** Variation across communities in service availability; programs tend to focus on short-term intervention; one northern community involves at-risk youth in program development/ delivery.
SERVICE/PROGRAM GAPS Little empirical evidence of programs in areas of prevention, intervention or exiting.	**SERVICE/PROGRAM GAPS** Need for more outreach workers, youth-focused detox and treatment services, residential mental health facilities; safe, supportive housing for sexually exploited youth.	**SERVICE/PROGRAM GAPS** Need for addiction treatment services for Aboriginal youth and a comprehensive support network for sexually exploited youth.
RECOMMENDED SERVICE STRATEGIES/PRINCIPLES Youth-oriented; multi-service agency approach; youth involvement in program development; peer support programs; continuum of services to address intervention and exiting needs.	**RECOMMENDED SERVICE STRATEGIES/PRINCIPLES** Focus on prevention and early intervention; education; community support for youth through a variety of programs; need for improved program integration/ coordination; need for structural changes to address underlying problems.	**RECOMMENDED SERVICE STRATEGIES/PRINCIPLES** Youth involvement in service planning/delivery; cultural reconnection; peer support; collaborative, multi-sectoral planning.

5. SUGGESTED READINGS

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Section II: Jurisdictional Scan

Section II: Jurisdictional Scan

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Sexual Exploitation of Youth in British Columbia

JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

1. INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared for the British Columbia Ministry of Health, provides a summary of a jurisdictional scan on the commercial sexual exploitation of youth. The scan involved a cross-section of service providers and managers in nine British Columbia communities. It was conducted during the months of January to March 1999. Throughout the report, the words of the respondents are in quotation marks. These are the opinions and perceptions of the key informants, some of which may not necessarily be consistent with the research findings. Where generalizations do occur, they apply to the nine communities scanned, and it should be noted that they are limited to those communities. Areas addressed in the interviews and report include crisis intervention, exiting support and prevention. As will be illustrated below, a consistent pattern emerged among the 37 informants, leading the authors to conclude that commercial sexual exploitation of youth is an emerging and recognized issue in British Columbia; but further research is recommended to confirm any conclusions drawn herein.

2. A FEW WORDS ABOUT WORDS[1]

Prostitutes

Children and youth will not be referred to as "prostitutes" in this report.

Underlying most key informant interviews there was a general agreement that youth who are involved in the sex trade are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. One respondent made this point quite clear... "I need to interject and say that these youth are not prostitutes, they do not choose to get into this as [they would if they were] an adult female or male. Youth are not able to make this choice. It is made for them. They don't work in the trade, as such. In every way they are sexually exploited."

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

The term "commercial sexual exploitation" is defined as sexual abuse of children and youth under the age of 18 years through the act of prostitution. Such exploitation involves the exchange of sex for drugs, food, shelter, money or other considerations.

At Risk

Children and youth who are considered to be "at risk" for commercial sexual exploitation are those who do not have strong connections within their family and community or are in the process of losing connections to their family, a support network of friends or mentors, or their community. Without these supports, these young people are vulnerable to being exploited.

Pimp

A "pimp" is a person who lives off the earnings of a person working in the sex trade. The pimp controls both the sex trade worker and what s/he earns. In the case of youth, the pimp may initially be a "boyfriend."

John

A "john," also known as a "date," a "trick" or a "customer," is an individual who buys another person for sexual purposes.

Aboriginal

For the purposes of this report, Aboriginal refers to all people with First Nations heritage including Status, Non-Status and Métis by definition of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the *Indian Act.*

3. METHODOLOGY

A copy of the project plan (including the purpose, assumptions, objectives, set of key informant questions and methodology) is attached to this report (see Appendix A). The jurisdictional scan data collection involved a series of one-hour interviews with three to five representatives from nine communities.

The nine were selected to ensure broad representation of B.C. communities, although these findings are limited to those nine communities using the following criteria as a guide. Those chosen:

- had designated services related to commercial sexual exploitation of youth; or
- had identified (as a community) commercial sexual exploitation of youth as an issue; or
- had not identified commercial sexual exploitation as a community; and
- represented a cross-section of community size, geographic location, population size and main industries (i.e., logging, fishing, tourism, skiing, etc.).

The selected communities were Burnaby, Dawson Creek, Kamloops, Kelowna, Port Hardy, Prince George, Vancouver, Victoria and Whistler. Six were known to have active Community Action Teams (CATs)[2] supported by the Ministry of Attorney General.

The key informants were selected from front-line staff (i.e., public health nurses, youth outreach workers, social workers, police officers) and policy/decision makers (i.e., municipal councilors, public health managers). In choosing who to interview the following criteria were also used: consultants' knowledge of community; information from a Ministry of Health e-mail inquiry; and direct inquiry to respective groups within the community, most often the local Community Action Team.

In all, 37 key informants were interviewed. Four (11 per cent) informants were municipal councilors; twelve (31 per cent) were managers (four public health, three social services, one police, four non-profit community organizations). Twenty-two (58 per cent) worked directly with youth [either as a nurse (5); social worker (2); police officer (6); victim assistant (1); outreach worker (6); city planner (1); or high school counselor (1)]. Two municipal councilors had additional roles (an alcohol and drug counselor working with youth and the executive director of a Native Health Centre).

Each interview was semi-structured and was guided by 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix A for a copy of these questions). Development of these questions was guided in part by the Ministry of Attorney General's Community Action Team Consultant Discussion Guide for Aboriginal communities and the Ministry of Health's request for information on crisis intervention, exiting support and prevention issues. The questions were pilot tested in Victoria, resulting in minor editing of one question. Four interviews were face-to-face and the other 33 were through telephone contact. This method of contact was used because of limited availability of time and resources.

4. RESULTS FROM THE SCAN

A. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth – Is It Happening?

In seven of the nine communities scanned, informants said that the commercial exploitation of youth is an issue and that, in most communities surveyed, it is increasing. In one community, we heard that police and youth outreach worker caseloads can involve up to 100 youth at any given time.

In two communities, the responses from key informants were mixed, the range in one community being between "no issue" to a more complicated reply that "predominantly, the young women are exchanging sex for alcohol and other drugs." In the second community, while some believed there was an issue, others felt there were some bigger problems among youth such as drug usage, depression, date rape and suicide. One informant, while not sure about what was happening in the community, said that her community "is a party town and nearly everyone is into one form of drugs or other." She added that there are eight escort services listed in the yellow pages and a number of ads appear on a regular basis in the local paper seeking "young, beautiful women." Expensive hotels will also "line up women."

B. Who Are the Youth? How Widespread Is the Problem?

Many respondents said that there is no way of knowing how many youth are commercially sexually exploited in their community. As one police officer reported, "There is no way to log and no records are kept." Although most informants acknowledged that there is no database of numbers, they consistently described sexual exploitation as a real problem and one that is very much hidden. Many sexually exploited youth are invisible to the casual or even informed observer. Where there is awareness of sexual exploitation of youth within a community, the majority were identified as female, 15-18 years old. Some were reported to be as young as 10-12 and a few even younger.

One respondent kept a list of young women. "[We have] 25 youth on that list who are under the age of 19 [with a] range from 12 to 19 years."

From small towns to big cities there was agreement that the youth are "from every class." However, the consensus was that the majority are "lower income kids." "Poverty is an issue." "Often they have a single parent, a mom with no resources." "Most come from socioeconomic[ally] disadvantaged and dysfunctional families." Many respondents described the youth as being isolated and disconnected with low self-esteem. "I would say that it is kids with low self esteem." "Most are young girls with low self-esteem," said another. They also reported that the youth come from families who are not functioning well and the youth often are under the care of the province living in foster homes, group homes or on their own. "They are often the kids who have problems with their home and family, the kids who drop out of school, the kids who come from more dysfunctional families, kids with no real self-esteem." "The children who were identified as infants at risk. A lot have had investigation into their need for protection." "Kids who have been involved with the Ministry."

Ethnicity tends to vary from one community to the next with the greatest range in Vancouver and Burnaby. One police officer said, "In massage parlors [they] have Asian women, from Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Some are here on visitor's visas but don't have a formal status to be in the country." In other communities Aboriginal youth tend to be over-represented. "I'd estimate that 65 per cent of the young women in the sex trade here are Aboriginal." In another community the respondent said, "Lots are First Nations." On the other hand another worker said, "They are not obviously Aboriginal youth. Most are Caucasian."

With regard to young men, most respondents said that there are a few young men involved. "There are a few young men, maybe two out of 40." "We might have three to four boys working at any one time that we know of, sometimes none." "We hardly find boys." In another community, a police officer reported that "[We] do have some young men who seem to be sexually exploited by older pedophiles."

"With regards to young men, it is happening but it's a different scene. They don't disclose very easily and the whole dynamic of what is happening for them is very different. There is a lot of embarrassment for them. I am sure that it is higher with males but they don't come forward in the same way, don't talk about it the same. It tends to be more of their choice as to what they do."

C. Are Some Youth More at Risk?

The most common factor that identified at-risk youth was their isolation and disconnection: "the ones who don't have a strong social support network to guide or protect them when these guys come along." "It's the kids with no supports who aren't connected to anybody or anything." "Kids who've been involved with the Ministry who've lived in foster homes and group homes. They don't have much stability in their lives. Most of them have a history of abuse already. Often they have no connection with care givers, too much change, no attachment to anybody in particular." Consistently, these young people were described as having low self-esteem, lacking strong family and parental bonds and having no real attachment to anyone. "For them, any warm body who seems to care is more than they're used to. They're disenfranchised from peer relationships, either sexually, physically or emotionally abused, traumatized in their youth. This population includes youth from anywhere."

Youth who were sexually abused, violated or traumatized in some other way while growing up were consistently identified as being more at risk. "The thing they all have in common is that they have all been sexually abused,

especially the females. It could have been in the home or rape outside." "The ones with abuse in their background..."

"It's a classic scenario," said one police officer, "these youth are disadvantaged from day one. Many mothers are single parents who have also been involved in the sex trade." Many respondents reported that the parents of these youth are often known to be young, and/or economically and socially disadvantaged. Many of the youth have been exposed to risks in their home and community. For example, one police officer told a story of a woman with a six-year-old daughter who "brought home a man who [sexually] abused the young girl." In another community a respondent said, "Most girls come from homes where parents drink alcohol and simply neglect them. There is a lot of physical abuse." Also identified as more at risk were "the ones with a family background of drug and alcohol abuse."

For some families and in some communities, sexual exploitation is intergenerational. In a larger urban community, an interviewee reported the intergenerational aspect, "Their mom works, their uncle is a pimp." In another community an informant said, "[We] have some mother-daughter teams working." As one respondent described it, "We have a couple of families where every daughter has been involved in the process." In the same Aboriginal community, many of the Elder women had been involved in the sex trade when they were young, but historically they did not speak about it.

Several informants said that some youth might have grown up in what appears to be a "well-functioning home." After some incident of family conflict or a traumatic event [i.e., date rape, gang rape], the youth will withdraw, become isolated, run away from home and be lured into the sex trade. "Often while growing up [they] had experience of sexual abuse or violence, [their] family may not know. A number of young people had a traumatic event and never told their family." "They may have a normal family but there has been some form of trauma, not necessarily in the family..."

Youth who are having problems at school, are frequently truant or have dropped out of school are also identified as at greater risk. "There are stages of disconnection for youth before they end up on the street. [While] they are still involved in school, something may happen and they start hanging around with a different set of friends. They start to skip school..." "Often times they have poor school performance and essentially [have] dropped out of the formal school system."

Some are described as having hidden disabilities, including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or another neurological disorder. "Most at risk are those youth who have less access to employment, have hidden disabilities, who are failing in the school system..."

In some communities, there are youth who are described as "curb kids." "They sit on streets with provocative behaviours, tend to be truant, and be on the street at night but are not living on the street." Others are identified as being on the street because they don't have a home. They are "involved in the sex trade" as an exchange for food and shelter.

D. Where Do the Youth "Work"?

When looking at these nine communities, the visibility of the activity ranges on a continuum from invisible to highly visible. In the bigger urban centres estimates vary but respondents stated that 20-50 per cent of the youth sex trade takes place on the street. "There is an area [in Vancouver] that is known internationally on the Internet as the 'kiddie stroll'."

According to the respondents, the sex trade involving youth also happens behind closed doors in nightclubs, massage parlours, karaoke bars and apartments [also known as "trick pads"]. In a large urban centre, a social worker reported, "Lots of kids have pagers and go with regular dates to an apartment." Another individual said, "A lot of the kids on the street scene have sugar-daddies, regulars they meet in their homes or in a designated predictable site." In almost every community, key informants agreed with one police officer who said, "The escort agencies seem to be pretty careful not to hire under-age girls."

In many small communities the trade is completely invisible, known only to well-informed professionals and/or those directly involved such as the youth and their customers. "It's not visible. You'd have to be in communication with the kids to know what is going on. You might see the kids hanging outside the video store beside the bar. They could just be hanging out or waiting for a trick. There is no particular kind of dress like in the larger centres. They just look like kids hanging out."

In one small community the locations of sex trade activity (including youth) are widely known and include private homes, public docks and fishing fleets. In other small communities the location where youth can be found varies from town to town but includes back alleys, parks, massage parlours, hitch-hiking, at truck stops and through specific business. For example, one person said, "I have heard from street workers and counsellors that the kids work through cab drivers. They'll take the kids to the tricks." In another community, "Several girls might be set up in a room. Sometimes one guy will pick a girl up, then the trick will drive her to the next date."

In slightly larger communities the youth sex trade is there if one knows where to look, and many of those communities have an emerging visible street trade moving from more hidden venues to a more urban style street stroll. In these communities there may be specific bars and motels known to have youth available as well.

E. How Do Youth Get Involved?

Many respondents suggested that the majority of youth (across the province from the Downtown Eastside to small rural communities) fall into the sex trade through their family, community or lifestyle. One informant said, "For many youth, family members are already involved and there's not really anywhere they can go." "It is easy for these youth to slide into the sex trade," said another and "difficult for them to imagine any other life." Many of the youth have grown up in an environment where selling sex is a "normal" part of life, "where family members are in the trade." Furthermore, there appears to be a code of silence about this intergenerational behaviour. "They don't talk about it in the community."

Some of these youth live with and support a boyfriend that neither of them would consider being a pimp. "Their boyfriend suggests a way for them to help pay the rent." "On the drug stroll in skid row the kids aren't being pimped. They just work [in the sex trade] to get enough money to fix, do drugs, then go back to work. Often their boyfriend does a B & E or purse snatching and they pool their money for drugs."

Recruitment is a word that applies to one specific aspect of the trade that exists more in urban than rural settings. It implies a degree of organisation with a pimp and one or more girls working for him. Even in major urban centres this applies to only a portion of the activity among youth. In this scene, a fairly consistent picture emerges. When recruiting youth, the pimp or his representatives go wherever there are young people. "It can happen anywhere—food courts in the malls, community centre, schools, anywhere," replied one informant. The pimps seem to prefer venues where youth are unsupervised including food fairs in malls, fast food restaurants and bus stops; but they also recruit in supervised locations including community centres, youth drop-in programs, schools, group homes, juvenile detention centres, youth shelters and treatment centres.

The classic recruitment scenario was described over and over: "It starts with kids with minimal self-esteem, a history of sexual abuse, then these men pay positive attention to them, tell them they're beautiful. Within weeks the kids are so isolated, they're not allowed to use the phone, talk to a social worker. There's always someone who works on the street with the new kid to make sure she doesn't leave." "The standard process involves befriending the girls by another girl, getting them to spot for them while they work, working a little for themselves, introducing her to the main pimp. Then he starts to seduce her with gifts, compliments. He tells her he loves her, needs her."

As well, rural girls who have left their home community to work in Vancouver are sometimes sent back by their pimps to recruit their friends. "Some guys have come here from Vancouver or Edmonton to get girls. Some girls go to Vancouver, then they get sent back to recruit girls. It's fairly subtle. They go to their friends and offer them a chance to 'make a few bucks helping me out'."

One respondent described another scenario in smaller rural communities. "There are younger girls spotting for older girls. They start by asking them to keep track of the license plate numbers of tricks and to wait for them to come back in exchange for dollars or drugs. They are often related—cousins, sisters, friends. There is recruitment but it's not necessarily by big-time pimps. Lots of girls work for their boyfriends, some of whom have had a series of girls work for them."

Commercial sexual exploitation of youth depends on keeping the child isolated once they are involved. One way this isolation is maintained is by moving them around on an

already developed circuit. As they travel the province, occasionally attempts—sometimes successful—are made to recruit from communities enroute. "The visible pimps keep coming back. A newer development is kids recruiting their friends. The pimps keep the young ones away from the nurses, outreach workers. They keep them isolated."

Within the pimp culture there are some specific emerging sub-cultures worth mentioning. Several ethnic communities were identified with their own trade and their own circuit; among these are Sikhs who move young Sikh girls from the lower mainland to the interior and organised Vietnamese gangs that move young girls from urban centres to smaller communities.

"Some sectors are less visible, but there is lots of evidence, for example, young Sikh girls being trafficked between Merritt and Surrey. These girls are being moved back and forth. It's the same thing in the Vietnamese community where they move young girls from Vancouver and other places...In each case the girls are taken to places that are known for serving that community. Then there's the usual circuit that moves girls around between Calgary, Edmonton, Seattle and sometimes Hawaii. There's also a circuit from Vancouver to Vegas to the Orient [Japan, Hong Kong] but it's a very underground network. We only know the tip of the iceberg for all of them."

F. Crisis Intervention Services

> "Overall there is no beginning, middle or end to the services. There's no common philosophy. No clear exit route. There are just services. As well, there's no dedication to sexually exploited youth so they get swallowed up by the broad street youth dedication."

No specific organized pattern or approach to addressing the issue of the commercial sexual exploitation of youth emerged within the nine communities. In six of the nine communities there is a Community Action Team (CAT) that is supported by the Provincial Prostitution Unit. The remaining three have some form of children and youth community advisory committees. Although the groups do not seem to have authority as to how services are coordinated, many respondents said they have increased communication and awareness of services among those represented at the table.

The representation and mandate of the CATs and community advisory committees seem to vary from community to community. In some communities, for example, public health is not represented. Frustration was also expressed by some respondents that these committees have no real budget or authority to implement their own recommendations. "It's useful, but everything hinges on money and the best laid plans without resources don't go very far."

Prince George has created a Youth Services Committee that has taken on responsibility for coordinating all the youth services in the region, incorporating 48 agencies and over 100 members. As a result, priorities have been identified and the community is working together to direct funding to these priorities. One example is new funding for youth detox services, identified by all informants as a need in their respective community. The Prince George chairperson states "It's been helpful in streamlining services and eliminating duplication of services. Support for recommendations [from the committee] is taken seriously by the funders. There is youth input at many levels. The sexually exploited youth sub-committee solicits youth input."

All nine communities had a range of youth services and activities. Most services are either drop-in or scheduled clinics with appointments. Some of these services are in or near schools while others are in public health or social services offices. Generally there is some form of outreach service in the community, in youth hangouts, on the street, etc. Several communities have zenith help lines where youth can phone for advice.

The Ministry for Children and Families provides funding for outreach services (i.e., Reconnect Youth Services) through local community agencies. Although outreach workers play a significant role, in one community frustration was expressed because "There is no social worker to do proactive work." The social services manager for that community confirmed that their role is not to become involved with families unless there is an issue of child protection. "We do not have adequate staff to do anything more," he said.

A spectrum of public health services (birth control counseling, STD clinics, needle exchange, alcohol and drug programs, prenatal pregnancy outreach care, etc.) are also available in all nine communities. Some have alternative school programs

sponsored by local school districts, some of which are located downtown. Some communities also have designated youth housing or "safe beds." Organized recreational activities are also common; some organized by parents but most run through community centres or local churches.

Police have become aware that the commercial sexual exploitation of youth is an urgent and emerging issue and that they have a significant role to play in working with the community to address it. The police role is evolving and as they get involved in local committees, they are recognizing the importance of incorporating their enforcement responsibilities into a larger community strategy. "The RCMP have definitely bought in," said one police officer. A number of non-police respondents also spoke about the important role that police play as members of community teams.

In general, access to crisis intervention services can be a problem, particularly at night. When answering the question about services, one policeman said that his community has "a lot of sporadic, spotty programs covering very short periods of time during the week. There is a youth recreation centre, different drop-in programs…run on an ad-hoc basis, available in different areas at different times." Other comments echoed this response.

G. Barriers to Exiting

> "[There is] more pressure to stay involved than to leave."

Respondents felt that for many youth, their entry into the sex trade was a direct result of their historical experiences. As one respondent stated, "The kids don't see any other future for themselves. They've had no experience with a normal family. Many are just following in the footsteps of older friends and siblings...They lack self-esteem. They already feel like they have no future when they're nine or ten years old." Another comments, "Eighty per cent of the youth come from families with intergenerational issues. They often believe it's all they can be so they don't really understand why the focus is always on change." They have grown up in an environment where there is no support in their home or in their immediate community for exiting. "For many youth, family members are already involved and there's not really anywhere else they can go."

Many of these youth have had repeated negative experiences with authority including social workers and the police, so are unlikely to turn to such sources for help regardless of their circumstances. As one interviewee observed, "Lots of these kids have been in care and have a huge mistrust of social workers." Many have a history of abuse—physical, sexual and emotional—and are wary of trusting adults. From small communities to big cities respondents state, "So many of these kids have been abused and have serious issues with authority." "It's not necessarily a big deal to the kids. Lots have been sexually abused. They've been doing it already without getting paid." Others concur: "So many of them have been sexually abused and lost their childhood a long time ago." "The majority have personal abuse issues that are unresolved." "Too many have unresolved family issues, generations of abuse." "Anyone needs emotional and physical safety in order to risk change. These kids have never experienced a trusting or healthy relationship, so why would they risk change?"

According to respondents, most of the youth in the sex trade were always isolated. "These kids never fit in before and they can't imagine it." "There are no options for them that they see as workable." "A lot of service providers have very unrealistic expectations of the kids just fitting in with other kids." This historical isolation coupled with unrealistic expectations of service providers that they can "reintegrate" and go back to school or work and be "normal" makes exiting seem almost a "joke" to many of the youth.

There is no other choice that seems possible to them. For many, their own internalised shame and low self-esteem effectively keep them trapped. "They don't believe they deserve otherwise." "They start to believe 'this is all I'm good for, this is what I do.' They develop an internalised sense of shame for being a hooker, carefully fostered by their pimp." "They get trapped into a lifestyle that is outside the mainstream. They can't imagine ever going back." It was also noted that when they do decide to go back, "They feel branded. Other kids make it impossible for them to reintegrate successfully." Another noted that "In lots of communities, even kids who only try it out a few times are stigmatised and excluded from programs and services because they're identified as a bad influence."

The lifestyle of the commercial sex trade acts as a barrier itself in both a positive and a negative way. On the one hand, there is a certain excitement and attraction in the lifestyle for awhile.

"The kids who get drawn in often like the idea of the party life, the money, the defiant lifestyle." "The drug lifestyle still looks exciting and like a good time to young kids." "The money and drugs are a huge incentive." "Sometimes it's fun. It can be great to go to parties with older people and anyway they're stoned and don't remember what happened often."

For many youth, it provides their first-ever sense of community and belonging. As one respondent noted, "The social bond they find in street culture is the only family they've known." "Many of them have a greater sense of control on the street than they had in their lives previously."

On the other hand, they genuinely find themselves trapped by drug addictions and fear for their own personal safety and/or the safety of their family members. Pimps actively cultivate this fear through threats, violence and intimidation and by requiring a payout. From one worker we heard, "The kids have to pay a large fee to leave a pimp—$5,000. At pimp rates they can't save that up. They hardly get to keep more than cigarette money." Another stated that for many the biggest barrier to exiting is "fear of retaliation by their pimps who threaten to hunt them down, kill them, tell their parents, recruit their little sister." Another respondent agreed, "They live in fear of pimps and johns for years."

Many observed general problems with the approach to services. One respondent stated, "We're starting at the wrong end of the problem," and another noted, "We have to make the services fit around them, not try to expect the kids to fit the services." Another commented, "There are too many strings attached to services; for example, there is housing that is only for kids who are in care, so kids have to go into care to receive services. Medical coverage for prescriptions should be covered for people without money without going into care. I've seen dental problems masked by heroin. We expect them to clean up without providing dental care."

Another area that was identified as a barrier is the criminal justice system. One worker observed, "The courts are a problem. It's terrifying for youth to testify when charges are laid against a pimp. Crown counsel doesn't take these cases seriously. Judges lack understanding. They don't give appropriate sentences to men who sexually exploit youth. The courts are too slow. Youth need to move on with their lives, not wait six to eight months in protective custody. It's too long." "It should be easier to get charges laid against pimps and johns. Right now there is little discouragement to stop men from buying sex from kids." "[We] need resources to promote prosecution."

Gaps in crisis intervention services provided another significant factor in the barriers to exiting for youth. Service providers identified a need for:

- **More outreach personnel**—someone who knows the youth and can stay in regular contact with them. "[There are] not enough street outreach workers to make contact with the kids in the first place." "There's a lack of outreach services. Right now we have two people with 100 cases."
- **Detox and treatment beds for youth**—perhaps one of the biggest gaps most frequently mentioned was access to youth alcohol and drug detoxification, treatment and counseling. It is an issue for all nine communities. Existing detox centres tend to be adult-oriented. As mentioned above, Prince George has taken steps to begin to address this need. Other communities echoed the need to do so. "Drug use is a huge problem. There is a lack of residential drug and alcohol treatment programs for youth. Currently the kids describe how they are victimized by adult males in the detox. The lack of youth addictions programs is a barrier to exiting." "Detox beds are full all the time." "We don't have a youth detox centre in the city." "A hot issue is the lack of detox and prevention services for drug and alcohol substance abuse. [Drug and Alcohol Services] are heavily oriented to adult alcoholics."
- **Residential mental health facilities**—"Some of these kids have serious mental health issues that are undiagnosed and there's a lack of services for those kids." Only one community spoke of having an outreach mental health nurse to work with these youth. Several others felt that children and youth, including those at risk of commercial sexual exploitation, would benefit from mental health services if they existed. In many of these communities there is no one they can refer children and youth to for mental health counseling.

- **Safe, supportive, residential environments specifically designed for commercially sexually exploited youth**—Safe, supportive housing was another frequently identified gap. As one respondent observed, "We don't have any housing options." Another said, when asked about housing for these youth in her community, "Nothing jumps to mind." A couple of communities have recently opened "safe" beds. One is using a community approach to place the youth with a family on a long-term basis. "Foster homes are not going to work for them. They need independent living in a co-op setting or something, with guidance, support and supervision." "We need different environments with long-term social supports for these kids. They carry the label for years."

H. Prevention

> "We need more creative approaches to reach these youth. Let the youth direct some of these as well."

There was consensus that in order to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth a multi-dimensional approach was required. Many of the respondents agreed that this approach should include building partnerships and recognising widespread community responsibility for the issue. It was suggested, as well, that this responsibility would ultimately have to be reflected in a shared financial commitment to increased resources. One person said that a good place to start was to have "public and privately funded service sector agencies partnering with service clubs and the private sector, all moving in the same direction." Outlined below are other prevention suggestions that were identified by the respondents.

Education Strategies

School programs

There was general agreement that education programs in the schools are critical "to teach youth a realistic view of what is going on." "[We need] more accessible education for kids like Taking Care of Ourselves, Taking Care of Others [TCO²]³. The message should be everywhere, especially at the Grade 8-9 level. It should be incorporated into the school system through the Family Life Program using alternative education techniques that really grab the kids' attention." "[Schools need the] TCO² presentation every year. More youth-led information. Teaching kids about options. Start younger, while they're in elementary school."

At the same time, it was felt that it is important to educate teachers and help them "know the warning signs." It was suggested that each school "should be creating school committees to begin addressing health and social services in every neighbourhood."

Community awareness

Many suggested "we need to educate society from the ground up" by letting people know the real situation and that the experience of prostitution is nothing like the Hollywood version portrayed in the movie "Pretty Woman." We need to make sure the message is realistic and accurate and fits its audience in order to increase concern generally. "We have to change the public stereotype. Now we have throwaway kids. The public still believes they choose to be 'hos'."

Community leaders have to get involved. "We need a healthy communities type of an approach" suggested one councilor, and "...we need to work on the agenda together." Others said that we need to give talks to a wide range of groups like Parents Without Partners, Parent Advisory Committees and church groups. One of the biggest problems, said one public health person, is the "lack of community commitment to its children. [We] have lost how we lived within the neighbourhood; social support is limited to two parents who are working. Children are left on their own far too early and not supported." She went on to say, "[We] need social supports and quality child care, to increase networks, to build neighhourhoods and broaden out safety nets for kids. Children need more adults in their lives than they currently have now."

"We need to educate society from the ground up. We need to offer parenting skills, information on abuse issues, on morals and ethics." Some respondents added that parents need to know how to recognise the symptoms, to know what to watch for. "We need to teach parents the warning signs, the danger spots."

Everyone agreed that this would require a team approach in order to be more successful. Many said that youth participation is essential, especially if the goal is to begin to truly value all of our youth. "We have to provide genuine support for youth, especially those being or at risk of being sexually abused."

Target the market

Many interviewed felt that there is nothing that can be done to reduce the number of men buying sex from children. "I think there is always going to be a great demand for children in the sex trade." Others felt that we have to make it clear that there is a difference between adults and kids in the sex trade. Several people felt that we have to develop programs specifically designed to educate pimps and johns, to help them "realise what they're doing." "[We need to] educate the population that people who buy sex from kids are engaged in criminal activity. Get the message out that 'real men' don't buy sex from kids."

Community Support for Youth

Alcohol & drug services

The close relationship between the sex trade and drug use was generally acknowledged. Many talked about the need for significantly more support for youth struggling with drug or alcohol use and more outreach workers to reach out to these youth rather than wait until they're "ready." "Current philosophy for drug and alcohol people is that youth need to engage with them and have to be ready to accept services. Clients have to be at that point where they are ready to change and this may be a barrier. [We are] dealing with a population who is not always seeing the need to change. [We] need to be reaching out more to youth."

Respondents emphasised the importance of early recognition and intervention programs for children at risk of using drugs or entering the sex trade. A number of respondents suggested that all schools use the provincially developed drug awareness program, which also helps to create a strong police-school relationship.

Supporting high-risk families

"It starts way before they are born." Many felt that there has to be a good home base for every child; that every child must have at least one person who is there consistently, who is supportive, who provides an environment that builds strong self esteem, "someone who cares." Some families need 24-hour support. As well, there is a need to broaden the safety net, creating networks through neighbourhoods, churches and various communities.

According to Whittaker at the University of Washington, "We should look more closely at mentoring. No matter who the kids are or what kind of background or family they come from, ongoing connections with someone makes a difference." "Many youth are caught in a cycle of group homes, foster homes, being sent beck to their families, being removed from their families and around again. As a result there is no continuity in their lives. One immediate remedy would be more and better foster parent education."

Improved self-esteem

"Society has to focus on effective strategies for improving the self-esteem of young women," said one informant. Others suggested the creation of special preventative supports, especially for Native girls. As one professional reported, "Kids that are well grounded, with loving, supportive parents and with good self esteem are not vulnerable to the traditional recruitment strategies of the pimps."

Healthy sexuality

Several respondents noted that until there is "a climate of acceptance for gay youth" and more open dialogue about sex with youth, they will be vulnerable to exploitation. All youth need to learn about healthy sexuality in order to help them be safe and to decrease the emerging market for the sex trade. "Nationally we are sexually dysfunctional or we wouldn't be an international sex trade destination or have such an enormous market for sex trade. There is an individual lack of maturation, no sexuality training for helping professionals, no comfort in discussing sexuality. That all has to change in order to prevent this."

Commercial sexually exploited youth

More effort must go into educating the youth who are already in the sex trade. One thing they need to know is that they are being abused. They are being used. They need somewhere to go to help them feel better about themselves. They need to feel like they are "worth it," that they can change and that they have access to the means to change. "There has to be enough beds for every kid who wants to exit." "In an ideal world where kids are not able to make it at home [the community needs to] have an open, warm and caring place for them to go. [We need] more of a community approach to raising kids, so that they don't become prey."

Increased youth activities

"Once they're on the street they just drift into [the sex trade] because there just aren't enough other activities or places to go for youth in such a small town." This comment (from a worker in one of the province's rural communities) also suggests that efforts must be made to create more activities for youth. Suggestions included integrating youth more into the community, creating youth-led programs and providing more accessible clubs and sports programs. "[We] also need to increase tolerance for adolescents and involve them in the community. They need opportunities to be employed in a meaningful way to contribute and be valued."

Structural Changes

Legal reform

Many respondents suggested the need to take a close look at the legal system and its relationship to the sex trade and youth. They suggested stricter laws recognising sexual exploitation of children as child abuse. "It should be easier to get charges laid against pimps and johns." Right now, according to more than one police officer interviewed, "there is little discouragement to stop men from buying sex from kids" because there is hardly any prosecution of pimps or johns.

The police respondents reported that it's difficult to manage young witnesses. The youth are not interested in going to court to testify, they said. Several social workers expressed the need to create child-friendly courts in much the same way that it has been done in the prosecution of child sexual abusers.

Early intervention

Throughout the province, professionals from all sectors said over and over that many of the youth who end up in the sex trade, could be identified before they were five years old, and that there was a need to "recognise our collective responsibility" for high-risk youth. "All of society has to start valuing youth, they are our future and we need to invest in them." Suggestions for early intervention fit into a number of specific strategies, including:

- actively and effectively preventing child abuse;
- more and better parent support and liaison when children are young, beginning at the pre-natal stage;
- identification of high-risk families earlier (during the prenatal period or when the children are in kindergarten);
- ongoing active involvement with high-risk families, including those who have FAS or other cognitive disorders;
- programs designed to help youth get to school every day using volunteer high-school or university students as "buddies"; and
- treatment available for very young sexually abused children, without a waiting list or cost attached.

"We need to realise that we are creating million-dollar babies. In retrospect, the cost of services over 20 years for many of these youth is enormous. By redirecting resources to prevention and early intervention rather than always reacting, we could do more and it would cost less."

The conclusion was that genuine prevention has to happen 15 years before the youth end up on the street or in the trade. One informant said that there is a need to "fundamentally change... the responsibility of raising children...to change our social attitude [so] that children are an important part of the community. [We need to] recognize [our] collective responsibility for them. Child-raising should ...not solely [be] in the hands of families..."

Redefine our conceptual (mental) maps

Preventing youth from entering into or remaining in the sex trade requires a different approach. "It won't work if you measure success based on numbers and short-term approaches." To be effective, it takes "planning, will and tenacity". Long range strategies must incorporate gender analysis, resiliency models, the concept of healing and realistic expectations of change. One counsellor suggested, to begin with, "We have to abolish co-ed group homes, co-ed residential treatment." "Incarcerating kids doesn't work; it just puts them into a negative environment."

Addressing underlying issues

To prevent a significant degree of sexual exploitation, several people suggested addressing some of the underlying issues of poverty and racism. One outreach worker reported, "A kid said to me, 'Look where I live, look where I go to school, look at my clothes, what choice do I have really?' I know his

situation is to stay home in a small apartment, where there are lots of kids, the place is a mess, and people are over all the time—what choice does he have? Other kids in the community have computers, cars, access to recreation, real choices."

Other respondents said that there is often denial around sexual abuse issues (one also linked this to residential schools). For example, several spoke about issues on First Nations reserves, including the linkage between child sexual abuse and consistent and heavy alcohol abuse. In the words of one interviewee, "When I talk to band chiefs, they still deny that there is an issue of sexual exploitation to address."

And yet, in almost every community in B.C., professionals suggested that Aboriginal youth were some of those at highest risk. For example, "There were a lot of Cree families transplanted to the community two generations ago that have been high-risk ever since because of their high poverty level." "We have to begin to effectively address poverty and all of the resultant issues on our reserve like child sexual abuse and consistent and heavy alcohol abuse in the Native community."

Besides poverty, there is a need to acknowledge and address racism itself. Many youth choose the street because they "have a greater sense of control on the street than they have had in their lives previously." That is partly a result of a widespread experience of racism that is not being acknowledged or dealt with in communities. "Everyone pretends we're not racist."

5. CONCLUSION

There is evidence in all of the communities scanned that children and youth are exchanging sex for money, drugs and alcohol. It's difficult to accurately assess the numbers of youth involved, because no data collection system exists. However, most communities agreed that either the numbers are increasing or awareness is increasing.

The youth are primarily female, age 12 years and up, include a disproportionate number of Aboriginals and are likely to come from low-income, poorly functioning families. There is anecdotal evidence of widespread intergenerational involvement in the sex trade, across a range of ethnic backgrounds.

A consistent profile of the youth most at risk includes isolation, low self-esteem and disconnection. They have often been identified as high risk from an early age and spent time in foster care. Some have mental-health and/or neurological conditions. Many come from backgrounds where they have experienced sexual and physical abuse; those who were not abused in their families usually experienced incident(s) of abuse before entering the sex trade.

A pattern of truancy from school is common before youth quit school completely. Few commercially sexually exploited youth have completed high school. Many have not completed elementary school.

Overall, the most usual place that youth are seen "working" is on the street. Reports include descriptions of inside venues that are not visible. In every community there was at least one known location to buy sex from youth.

For most, their vulnerability to the sex trade begins long before they get involved. The cycle that traps them includes poverty, dysfunction within their family, lack of community support, sexual abuse, early sexual experience and lack of adult support. They seem to get involved in the sex trade as a normal life progression. Others are recruited through a carefully planned strategy executed by pimps and their representatives.

Although there are a variety of services for youth in most communities, they tend to lack integration; and few are specifically targeted to commercially sexually exploited youth. Only one of the nine communities reported an overall co-ordinated youth strategy. The six that have Community Action Teams expressed frustration about the lack of resources and authority to implement committee recommendations.

Barriers to exiting fall into two categories:

a) those internalised by the youth—addictions, fear of pimps, inability to imagine any other life; and

b) structural barriers—unrealistic expectations by policy makers and service providers, the criminal justice system, and gaps in services—especially a lack of adequate and consistent outreach, alcohol and drug treatment, mental health counselling and supportive housing.

Prevention and early intervention are keys to addressing this issue. There was a consensus that in order to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth a multidimensional approach was required. Such an approach would need to be community-wide with a multi-pronged educational strategy, and incorporate an examination of the collective responsibility for the healthy development of all children, youth and families.

APPENDIX A

Work Plan for Jurisdictional Scan & Final Report

Purpose of Project

The purpose of the project is to summarize and analyze existing data on youth involved in the sex trade in British Columbia. The consultants will write a final report that incorporates information from a jurisdictional scan, literature review and aboriginal youth paper, including recommendations based on the above.

Project Assumptions

The work of this project is being carried out within a conceptual framework based on the following assumptions:

- that the youth who have personal experience in the sex trade provide the primary focus of this research;
- that the process of conducting an environmental scan and preparing an Aboriginal youth paper may raise awareness of the issues.

Project Objective

The project objective is to support the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Prostitution Working Group in the development of effective public policy to address sexual exploitation, particularly in the areas of prevention, crisis intervention and exiting support.

Definitions of Terms

To support the research process and the writing of the final report, a glossary of terms will be developed. Terms to be defined will include: prostitutes, commercial sexual exploitation, pimp, john and Aboriginal.

Recommended Communities

- Victoria
- Vancouver
- Kamloops
- Prince George
- Dawson Creek
- Burnaby
- Port Hardy
- Whistler
- Kelowna

Key Informant Questions

The questions are designed to address the three areas identified by the Working Group—i.e., prevention, crisis intervention and exiting support. The preamble to each interview will identify who we are and what we were asked to do. We expect each interview to last about one hour. The questions below will be used to guide the interview process.

1. Based on your experience and information, are there youth in your community who are being commercially sexually exploited?
2. i. Can you give us your impression of who those youth are (gender, age range, and ethnicity)?

   ii. Are there some youth who are more at risk than others?
3. Where do the youth in the trade work in your community?
4. i. Are youth being actively recruited into the sex trade?

   ii. Can you describe where and how?
5. i. Would you describe the services and supports that are available to youth in your community (housing, health, counselling, alcohol & drug treatment, etc.)?

   ii. Do sexually exploited youth access them?
6. What barriers exist for youth in the sex trade that prevent them from exiting (education, employment, housing, hopelessness, addictions, etc.)?
7. What key considerations do you think would contribute to preventing youth from being sexually exploited?
8. We already have a copy of (report name) that was developed on your community. Are there any additional reports or sources of information we should know about?
9. Do you have any recommendations that you would like to see in our final report?
10. Do you have any other comments?

Jurisdictional Reports

Existing jurisdictional reports will be used as background materials. It is anticipated that this list will expand as we speak with key informants. A complete list will be included in the final report.

Methodology/Planned Actions

1. Prepare for Key informants' interviews and specific jurisdictional scans

   Activities include:

   - Clarifying purpose of environmental scan (e.g., meetings with Steering Committee and other relevant provincial staff)
   - Gathering and reading background materials in the specific jurisdictions to be surveyed
   - Selecting communities to interview based on the following criteria, to ensure broad representation:
     - communities that have designated resources in the area of commercial sexual exploitation
     - communities that have identified commercial sexual exploitation of youth as an issue
     - communities that have not identified commercial sexual exploitation as an issue
   - Selecting key informants to interview
   - Key informants will be selected from front-line staff (e.g., public health nurses, youth community workers, social workers, police officers) and policy/decision makers (e.g., municipal councilors, public health managers)
   - Maximum number of key informants per community will be 3 or 4

- Criteria for choosing who to interview will include the following:
  - consultants' knowledge of community
  - information from Ministry of Health email inquiry
  - direct inquiry to respective groups within the community

2. Gather Key Informants' Data

   - Develop questions in collaboration with aboriginal consultant and other members of the literature review team
   - When work plan is finalized, pilot test questions in Victoria (will modify questions if necessary and let project manager know)
   - Interviews will be either face-to-face or telephone because of available time and budget
   - Interviews to be completed by the end of February/early March

3. Analysis of Data

   Data will be analyzed initially by aggregating the responses under the respective key informants' questions.

   - As well, the data will be examined for themes of prevention, crisis intervention and exiting support, and to provide synopsis of the issues and solutions.
   - The report will provide a synopsis of the issues and solutions based on these themes.

4. Final Report

   - Review the literature synopsis, aboriginal youth paper and jurisdictional scan information
   - Summarize key points from all three reports, include synopsis of issues and solutions in the area of prevention, crisis intervention and existing support
   - Present final report to steering committee

Notes

1 A Few Words About Words is adapted from the Report of the City of Burnaby Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution of Children and Youth.

2 CATs—Community Action Teams, local networks of service providers, justice personnel, community representatives, youth and other stakeholders that work in the community to prevent sexual exploitation and reduce the damage to neighborhoods caused by street prostitution.

3 A youth drama group that gives interactive workshops on sexual exploitation.

Sexual Exploitation of Youth in British Columbia

Section III: Literature Review and Consultations with Aboriginal Agencies

Section III: Literature Review and Consultations with Aboriginal Agencies

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Literature Review and Consultations with Aboriginal Agencies

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report, prepared for the B.C. Ministry of Health, provides a summary and analysis of academic literature on youth involved in the sex trade, and an overview of the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth. Areas addressed in the report include prevention, intervention and exiting as they relate to youth sexual exploitation.

Literature reviewed for the report was provided by the project's steering committee, with additional information obtained through an electronic search of academic journal indices for English-language research published since 1997. We excluded literature based on research conducted in countries whose social and cultural context differs so significantly from Canada's that it has questionable relevance to the sexual exploitation of youth in this country. Given the extensive range of issues covered by the literature, we also limited the issues addressed in this review, in order to synthesize the major factors and concerns that arise.

The overview of sexually exploited Aboriginal youth includes a brief section on research literature relating to Aboriginal youth, and a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with service providers working with Aboriginal youth.

A concluding section provides an overview of the literature review and the information obtained through interviews with Aboriginal workers in relation to the Integrated Plan of the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Prostitution Work Group.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW – INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, concern over the sexual exploitation of children and youth has resulted in a growing body of research and descriptive literature on the problem. While the majority of the early research was conducted in the United States, researchers in other countries including Canada, Great Britain and Australia have also made substantial contributions. In Canada, a national, federally sponsored study in the early 1980s on child sexual abuse[1] included several chapters on youth prostitution and received worldwide attention. Especially in the past decade, Canada has become a major research contributor and a leading partner in international activities aimed at addressing the sexual exploitation of children, such as the 1996 World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the 1998 international summit "Out from the Shadows," which brought together policy makers and youth to explore solutions.

The current body of material on child sexual exploitation includes academic research as well legal initiatives, government policies and services that are part of an expanding international social policy agenda designed to prevent youth sexual exploitation, provide support to those involved and assist them in exiting.

Research on child sexual exploitation has predominantly focused on identifying the individual background factors of young people who become involved in prostitution. This research, described in more detail below, is helpful in understanding who becomes involved in prostitution and in identifying areas where prevention may be most effective. There is also a substantial amount of research describing the experiences of sexually exploited youth and the risks they face.

An increasing amount of documentation is becoming available on recent government policy initiatives and community programs, most of the readily available material relating to various federal and provincial initiatives in Canada. But most of this information is descriptive, and little program evaluation has been done to demonstrate which approaches are most effective in preventing youth prostitution, or providing support for those engaged in prostitution and those who might choose to exit.

3. STATE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As one can expect to find in any body of research, there is great variation in the methodological approach to research on sexually exploited youth. The different approaches, together with methodological weaknesses, greatly limit the comparability of findings and hamper the development of cumulative knowledge.

In a review of research in the late 1980s, Earls and David[2] described the research as being "plagued by a number of conceptual and methodological problems," including the lack of standard criteria for defining subgroups of those studied, faulty sample selection, lack of control groups and failure to provide gender-specific data. Other factors that limit comparability and/or validity of findings include variation in the ages of those being studied (not all studies have focused exclusively on adolescents or have controlled for age at entry); method of participant selection (e.g., early studies tended to draw upon institutionalized youth); and the relative scarcity of data comparing the experiences of youth involved in prostitution with those who are not. In addition, some studies have obtained their data from retrospective accounts by adults who were involved in prostitution as young people, but are no longer involved. As Shaw and Butler observe, this form of data adds another filter to the event (in addition to the researcher's interpretation) and calls for caution in drawing conclusions. Reviews by Ennew, Gopal, Heeran and Montgomery (1996) and Brannigan and Van Brunschot (1997) identify a similar range of problems.

Research on sexually exploited youth and the area of prostitution in general has not developed a coherent theoretical framework on which to base further research. A major problem is the difficulty of developing a theoretical explanation that incorporates the range of structural and individual factors and sociological and psychological theories that can be associated with prostitution. Earls and David[3], for example, note the almost complete separation of research on females and males, and observe that "there is little in the way of theory to guide investigators." In their review of research on street and working children, Ennew and Milne (1996) suggest that research has generally ignored existing social-science theoretical frameworks and used arbitrary research techniques. This has resulted in poor conceptualizations, contradictions and overlaps in both research and programming.

In another recent assessment of research on young people and prostitution, Shaw and Butler (1998) suggest that the quality of research has improved over the past decade. However, they observe that methodological problems continue to impede the development of sound knowledge on which to base sound practice. They also identify a number of interconnected difficulties in conducting research in the area.

In Shaw and Butler's view, one of the fundamental deficiencies in the knowledge base is a conceptual bias in defining the problem. Research has predominantly focused on those who supply sex, largely ignoring the users and the social context that creates the demand for prostitution. This leaves a large gap in our understanding of the ways in which society maintains prostitution.

According to Shaw and Butler, focusing research on those who provide sex also results in narrowly portraying young people primarily in terms of their prostitution activities, early problems and deficits, rather than as complex beings with strengths and competencies. Shaw and Butler reiterate the view of Lowman (1987) that too little attention has been given to young people's actual accounts of their experience; or their accounts have been marginalized through translation into academic discourse, losing the true meaning of their experiences. Excluding the reality of youths' experiences from the knowledge base maintains their powerlessness to convey to adults the reality of their experience. Correspondingly, the adult construction of the research problem reinforces adult stereotypes about childhood and adolescence.

Much of the research has focused on identifying the background experiences of sexually exploited youth, in order to understand who becomes involved and why. A variety of methodological approaches have been used, including in-depth interviews with a small number of sexually exploited youth, surveys, quasi-experimental designs comparing young people involved in prostitution who have been sexually abused with those who have not been abused, and (less frequently) comparisons of young people involved in prostitution with young people who are not involved, along with other approaches including meta-analysis and comparisons of selected existing studies.

As Shaw and Butler observe, some of the research on background factors has tended to draw simplistic conclusions about cause and effect. In their assessment, the best work in

this area of research has attempted to distinguish between direct and indirect explanations, such as the multivariate analysis conducted by Hagan and McCarthy on information provided by street youth in Toronto and Vancouver in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Overall, research in the area of youth sexual exploitation has demonstrated that a number of factors are common to the early years of many youth who become involved in prostitution. However, research is limited by conceptual, definitional and methodological deficiencies and differences and has not provided a consistent model or explanation for the role of these factors in youth entry into prostitution.

4. GAPS IN THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Researchers have identified a number of gaps in the knowledge that has been generated in relation to youth sexual exploitation. Even the extent of the problem is not known, with estimates varying widely.

As noted earlier, the majority of research has focused on developing knowledge about the youth who sell sex. Little is known about those who buy sex, and most research makes only passing reference to the socioeconomic context that supports the commercial sexual exploitation of youth.

There is almost no research that explores the experiences of different ethnic groups involved in youth prostitution. Survey and interview research may include information on ethnic background of those under study, but research rarely provides analysis in terms of differences in early background or the experiences of different racial or ethnic groups involved in prostitution. One of the few exceptions is the research conducted by Silbert and Pines (1982) which provides some descriptive data according to racial identity.

Shaw and Butler (1998), while writing from Wales and speaking of the literature in general, refer specifically to the lack of information about black youths as compared to young white youths. The same is true of ethnic groups among youth in Canada who experience economic and social marginalization. As noted in a Canadian consultation[4], rejection on the basis of race (or other differences such as appearance or sexual orientation) makes youth more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The increased risk is particularly evident for Aboriginal youth, whose numbers are disproportionately high not only among sexually exploited youth,[5] but also in the social service, child protection, welfare and criminal justice systems. Lowman[6] has commented on the absence of attention to Aboriginal youth prostitution in Canadian research, pointing to the silence of the 1984 Badgley report in this regard, and to the need for inclusion of race in any discussion of youth prostitution.

Little or no research is available on the range of venues in which youth sexual exploitation occurs. While sexually exploited youth appear to be most often exploited on the street, other venues have also been reported.[7] Information on the location of youth sexual exploitation will assist in developing services that will most effectively reach the broad population of sexually exploited youth.

Another area that has received almost no attention in the research is the association of parental substance abuse with youth entry into prostitution. An exception is B.C.'s 1997 CRD study, in which a small proportion of youth reported that they had been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Research on FAS and Fetal Narcotic Effects (FNE) is relatively new, but early findings suggest that affected youth are at higher risk for a variety of maladjustment problems including sexual exploitation, living on the streets, mental-health issues and criminal activity[8]. The prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse among the parents of sexually exploited youth suggests that this may be another factor placing youth at high risk of sexual exploitation.

The least developed area of knowledge with regard to sexually exploited youth is an understanding of what motivates and supports youth who successfully exit commercial sex work. Researchers and youth themselves have proposed numerous interventions at the structural and individual levels to support those who are seeking to exit. However, as noted by Shaw and Butler (1998) for example, there is an absence of longitudinal studies that would provide knowledge of how long youth remain involved. While the reasons for entering prostitution provide some guidance for policy and practice, the academic literature provides little insight into why and how young people leave prostitution.

5. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS

A. Number of Youth Involved in Prostitution

Youth involved in prostitution are an essentially hidden population, and generally resistant to official identification. While there is evidence that the number of youth involved has grown considerably in recent years[9], estimates of the number of sexually exploited youth vary greatly, do not exist at all for many of the world's nations, and reflect the many difficulties in estimating the size of the problem, whether international or locally.

A review of research conducted for the World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children[10] describes the numbers that have been produced as "guestimates" rather than research, and concludes that the widely varying estimates produce a very confusing picture. The problems that plague efforts at estimating the size of the problem include differences in the definition of sexual exploitation, inclusion of different age categories, the use of different statistical techniques and population indicators, and seasonal fluctuations in youth involvement. Other problems of assessing the extent of the problem from existing research include the absence of information as to whether youth have been steadily involved for a period of time, or have perhaps had only a single or fleeting involvement in prostitution.

In Canada, research on the extent of prostitution has been conducted in a number of major urban centres in the past decade. While these studies use data acquired through a range of techniques and sources to provide a picture of the extent of involvement, most of them have not focused specifically on youth and are not a reliable source for determining the extent of youth involvement. In evaluating a 1985 Criminal Code amendment related to street prostitution, efforts were made to assess the extent of street prostitution, and it was observed that "there was a very real divergence of opinion as to the extent of juvenile prostitution in Canada"[11]. A decade later, the absence of reliable estimates of the extent of youth prostitution is still a barrier to an adequate understanding of the problem.[12]

An indication of how estimates for a single locale vary according to the source of information is demonstrated in a report from the City of Burnaby[14], where the numbers of youth involved in street prostitution included 34 young women under age 19 involved in the sex trade in a 12-month period, based on police contact reports; 19 youths under age 19 involved in prostitution, based on numbers of social-service recipients over two years; and 124 youth under age 19 either involved, or strongly suspected of being involved, in prostitution over a 16-month period, based on street-worker contacts. As the report notes, these numbers not only vary considerably, but also include only those working on the street. While street-based prostitution is most visible, sexually exploited youth also work in a variety of off-street venues. In addition, youth move from one jurisdiction to another in order to avoid police detection.

In their recent review of research, Shaw and Butler assess the approaches that have been used to estimate the size of the problem and advocate what they refer to as a "mark-recapture" technique. This method, recently used more frequently in population estimates for a variety of purposes, relies on service-agency data and incorporates a measure of the number of users who "overlap" on different service lists to draw inferences about the size of a particular group. While no method will provide an accurate estimate, Shaw and Butler judged this approach as providing a better approximation and a more promising basis for social service planning.

B. Age at Entry

Research on sexually exploited youth indicates that entry into sex work usually occurs at an age when it would be expected that youth are living at home and attending school. The Badgley report (1984), which included the results of a National Juvenile Prostitution Survey of 229 youths involved in prostitution, reported that over 80 per cent had turned their first trick before they were 18, with an average age of 18 for males, and a few months younger for females. In two studies of Vancouver street prostitution conducted in the late 1980s by Lowman[14], the average age at entry was close to 16 for both females and males, and a survey of 75 sexually exploited youth[15] in Victoria, British Columbia reported an average age at entry of 15.5 years, with the youngest aged 11. While many of the studies that provide data on age at entry draw their information from adults involved in prostitution, Lowman[16] reported that initial involvement

during the mid-teenage years is a generally consistent finding in Canadian research.

Some youth become involved when they are as young as eight years old[17], and a Canadian consultation observed that "more and more pre-teen Canadian children are being forced into street prostitution."[18] Bagley (1997) reports that the earlier the age at entry, the more likely it is that the youth has been sexually abused. A problem of particular concern in terms of the early age of entry is the growing incidence of AIDS, which leads those buying sex to prefer younger clients because they seem less likely to be infected.[19]

C. Gender

Sexually exploited youth are predominantly female, although the research also reports a substantial level of involvement by males. Of 229 youths reported on by Badgley[20], approximately two-thirds were female. A more recent report suggests that the proportions in Canada are in the range of 75 to 80 per cent female and 20 to 25 per cent male and transgendered youth.[21]

There is some evidence that females enter prostitution at an earlier age than males. The gender difference in age is small, and not all studies consistently confirm an earlier entry age for females.[22] However, the Badgley study[23] reported that three-quarters of females interviewed had turned their first trick by age 16, compared to a slightly smaller proportion of males. The CRD study found that almost all females interviewed were under 18 when they first traded sexual favours, compared to just under three-quarters of males.

Little research is available on how long youth remain involved in prostitution. Price (1989) observed that males tend to be involved in prostitution for a shorter period than females, that it is essentially an adolescent phenomenon for males, and that those who remain involved in street life are more likely to turn to other criminal activity.

6. ANTECEDENTS TO THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF YOUTH

As Wolff and Geissel observe: "Understanding the circumstances leading to entering prostitution may be important in developing strategies to curb the entry of youths into the street trade, and to limit[ing] the exploitive and often threatening situations many prostitutes face."[24]

A. Structural Factors

The body of research on youth involvement in prostitution has grown substantially over the past 20 years. Most studies, however, have focused on the individual factors associated with prostitution, paying little attention to the structural socioeconomic factors that may provide an enabling environment for the sexual exploitation of youth.

Individual factors associated with youth prostitution can all, by one path or another, be traced back to the larger society, and its failure to foster the healthy emotional and psychological development of young people and provide the economic environment for ensuring that healthy activities and work opportunities are available to them.

To develop effective approaches to preventing the sexual exploitation of youth, and providing appropriate support for those engaged in sex work and those seeking to exit, we need to understand both the structural and individual factors that lead youth to become involved in sex work, as well as those that keep them involved (or prevent them from exiting).

The sexual exploitation of youth is attributable to broad social problems that have particularly harmful effects for young people. While the academic literature provides few examples of direct research on the relationship between structural factors and child sexual exploitation, structural issues that have been mentioned include poverty[25] and the increasing feminization of poverty[26]; homelessness[27]; high youth unemployment[28]; socialized gender roles and gender inequity[29]; and economic and social marginalization based on class, age, race and sexual orientation. Discussion of these structural problems in the literature (e.g., Pitts, 1997) indicates that until they are incorporated into the overall approach to understanding and addressing child sexual exploitation, social responses may deter or support individuals but will not provide a broad or enduring solution to the problem.

B. Individual Situational Factors

As would be expected, given the complexity of society and human differences, no single factor or specific pattern in a child's early years is consistently identified as a precursor to entry into prostitution. The most embracing theme is the youth's vulnerability to being at risk of prostitution as a result of leaving home at an early age (running away or being thrown out) because of their early family environment, including some combination of sexual and physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect, parental violence, leaving school early, individual personality factors, and broader situational factors such as unemployment and lack of housing.

Weisberg (1985) observed this combination of factors as a sequence that began with an unstable and abusive home, early sexual activity—often including intra-familial sexual abuse—and poor school attendance, followed by running away from home or from an institution which then, for some, leads to entering prostitution. Jesson (1993) speaks of the linked phenomena of running away and early sexual abuse. Barrett (1997) refers to the process of "push and pull," a term that researchers such as Lowman (1991) have used to distinguish the role of different factors associated with youth entry into prostitution. Factors such as sexual abuse serve to push youth away from home and out on to the street, while the survival needs of living on the street, the promise of independence through access to money and, for some, the perceived glamour of prostitution[30] initially draw youth into prostitution.

In a summary of the literature, Shaw and Butler (1998) suggest that there is "overwhelming prevalence of disruption and discord in the early lives of young people involved in prostitution" and that "sexual abuse, neglect, problems at school, social class, membership of young offender peer groups, unemployment, problems of shelter, and life on the streets are particularly associated with the incidence of youth prostitution."[31]

Sexual Abuse

The link between early sexual abuse and youth involvement in prostitution has probably been examined more often than any other antecedent to youth prostitution—through either primary research or a review of existing literature. As with other research on sexually exploited youth, the methodological limitations and differences in research on early sexual abuse make it difficult or questionable to compare findings. The definition of sexual abuse, including severity and period of abuse, varies greatly across studies; the relationship with the perpetrator has been defined differently or not at all; and researchers have not always distinguished between female and male experiences in reporting their findings.

Early in contemporary U.S. research on prostitution, James and Meyerding (1977) compared the early sex experiences of female adults and adolescents involved in prostitution with those of "normal" women as indicated in existing research. Those involved in prostitution were found to have experienced sexual activity at an earlier age, and been subjected to a higher incidence of incestuous relationships, rape and sexual advances by elders. The researchers proposed that "early, traumatic sexual self-objectification may be one factor influencing some women toward entrance into prostitution or other 'deviant' lifestyles."[32] The sexual exploitation of children was also the subject of research in Canada in the 1970s—for example, a report by Taking Responsible Action for Children and Youth (1979) identified sexual abuse as a common factor in sexually exploited youth, based on their review of existing literature.

In the next two decades, a high incidence of early sexual abuse has been a common theme in research looking at the antecedents to child sexual exploitation.

A seminal study conducted in San Francisco in the early 1980s[33] tried to overcome some of the sample-selection weaknesses of earlier studies by locating research on the street and including a control group. Of 200 females interviewed who were or had been involved in street prostitution, well over one-half (60 per cent) reported being a survivor of early sexual abuse, and 70 per cent of survivors reported that the abuse contributed to their decision to enter prostitution. A Canadian replication of the Silbert and Pines study by Bagley and Young (1987) found an even stronger pattern of sexual abuse among youth involved in prostitution (73 per cent compared to 29 per cent in a control group).

Analyzing surveys of street youth in Toronto and Vancouver in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Hagan and McCarthy

established a number of dependent variables—including minor theft, serious theft and prostitution—and independent variables—including unemployment, sexual abuse, family environment, parental control and difficulties at school.[34] Using this multi-regression approach, Hagan and McCarthy found that street youth that became involved in prostitution were more likely to have experienced early sexual abuse than those who didn't become involved.

While there is a high incidence of sexual abuse in the backgrounds of the youth involved in prostitution, researchers such as Silbert and Pines (1982) and Widom and Ames (1994) have concluded that multiple forms of early abuse (occurring in multi-problem families) contribute to youth leaving home and entering prostitution.

Relationship of Perpetrator

As we noted earlier, research uses different definitions of "abuse," and some researchers report early or "precocious" involvement in sexual activity as being associated with entry into prostitution, without labeling it as sexual abuse. In addition, information on the gender or specific relationship of the perpetrator is not always reported, so findings are not readily comparable.

The majority of research reporting information on the perpetrator indicates that the abuse is most likely to have involved a family member.[35] Lowman (1991) observes that it is important to consider the nature of the relationship and that, as would be expected, the more inclusive the measure, the higher the incidence of early abuse that is found.

Sexual Abuse and Sex of Youth

While sexual abuse has been clearly established as a common factor in the early lives of young people who become involved in prostitution, it appears the incidence is higher among females than males. In an examination of studies that provide comparative gender data, Lowman (1991) observed that most studies have found a much higher incidence of early sexual abuse among females, suggesting that the circumstances describing female entry into prostitution may be very different than for males.

Relationship between Early Sexual Abuse and Youth Sexual Exploitation

Some studies have attempted to isolate the particular effect of early sexual abuse on later entrance into prostitution. Simons and Whitbeck (1991), for example, in their survey of 40 adolescent runaways and 90 adult homeless women, examined such factors as sexual abuse, physical abuse, criminal behaviour, substance abuse and running away, and found that early sexual abuse was the only factor significantly related to later involvement in prostitution. Similarly, in Hagan and McCarthy's studies (1995, 1998) of street youth in Vancouver and Toronto, while most street youth did not report involvement in prostitution, those who did were more likely to have been sexually abused by a parent during their early years.

Numerous studies examine or speculate on how early sexual abuse increases the likelihood of entrance into prostitution. The range of effects includes increased likelihood of subsequent victimization[36], low self-esteem[37], isolation from normal social activities[38] and a youth's pragmatic decision that if they are going to be sexually exploited, they may as well be paid for it.[39] Other studies[40] have observed a range of other mental health problems associated with childhood sexual abuse, such as depression and eating disorders.

Research findings have led most who have studied the presence of early sexual abuse[41] to observe that sexual or other forms of abuse do not themselves lead directly to prostitution—as evidenced by the fact that most young persons who have been abused do not become involved in prostitution. For some, however, their eventual response to abuse is to run away from home; and it is living on the street that greatly increases the likelihood of entering into prostitution.

In their review of the antecedent evidence to child prostitution, Shaw and Butler draw a similar conclusion. They suggest two basic explanations for the relationship between early sexual abuse and youth sexual exploitation: a) the abuse results in a loss of self-worth, which leads to an indifference to how one is treated: and b) the abuse sets in motion other events, including running away from home, which lead the youth into risky activities including prostitution. Thus, early sexual abuse produces the psychological and situational conditions that, for some, lead

them into prostitution. Silbert and Pines[42] draw the link between sexual abuse and sexual precocity for young girls. Early sexual activity becomes a source of conflict between the adolescent and her parents and may be the reason for leaving or being thrown out of home, which in turn leads her to the street, where the effects of sexual abuse leave her particularly vulnerable to entering prostitution.

Similarly, Edney[43] suggests that early sexual abuse in fact prepares young women for prostitution. Based on an in-depth study with a small group of women who had been sexually abused and had traded sex, Edney proposes that girls who have been sexually abused develop an identity tied primarily to their sexuality and take on a victim state including a poor sense of self; a sense of alienation from home, school and social networks; and lack of control over their home and social environments. Their victim identity conditions them to subordinate and helpless roles, and prostitution is perceived as offering them both a means of independence and of taking control of their life, even while it is a continuation of their earlier exploitation. Gender inequality in the employment market is another factor Edney identifies as contributing to youth prostitution. For girls who already perceive themselves as having limited choices, prostitution offers an expedient means of earning money and gaining some control over their life.

Researchers do not agree about the link between sexual abuse and youth prostitution. In Canada, the 1984 Badgley Report by the Committee on Sex Offences Against Children and Youths concluded from a survey of 229 youths involved in prostitution in cities across Canada that they were at no more risk of having been a victim of a sexual offence during their early years than other Canadian children. In a review of the committee's findings, Lowman describes a number of methodological problems in their analysis such as comparing different types of data, and disputes the validity of their conclusion. He finds that youth involved in prostitution "were twice as likely to have experienced a first unwanted intra-familial sexual act involving force or threats of force as other members of the Canadian population."[44]

Brannigan and Fleischman (1989) examined selected studies including the Badgley Report, and concluded that early sexual abuse had not been consistently demonstrated and that "pathology" resulting from early experiences had been given unwarranted attention at the expense of other issues. Lowman (1991) identified a number of weaknesses in their analyses and their conclusions. He questioned the individualistic "opportunity" model of prostitution, and reiterated the need for considering both structural and individual factors in attempting to understand and develop responses to youth prostitution.[45]

Overall, the literature leaves little doubt about the high incidence of sexual abuse among sexually exploited youth. It is also clear, however, that sexual abuse is not a single or causal link to later involvement in prostitution. Rather, it is one of a number of factors that combine to lead some young people to drift toward living on the street and, for some of these children, to become involved in sex work.

Family Environment

Research indicates that the early years of those who later enter prostitution are not only frequently marked by sexual abuse by a family member, but often characterized by a home environment that is dysfunctional, discordant and emotionally neglectful. As early as 1973, in interviews with a group of young females involved in prostitution in Seattle, Washington, Gray identified a number of factors that typified their home lives, such as a poor relationship with parents, inadequate supervision, lack of intimacy in communication patterns, and failure of parents to provide positive social reinforcement, affection and attention.

Subsequent research has identified a number of family/home factors that characterize the early lives of many sexually exploited youth. The definitional and conceptual problems that have been mentioned earlier apply in this area as well, so that some of the factors may overlap or may not be measuring the same circumstances. Factors identified include frequent violence by the father towards the mother and, to a lesser extent, by the mother towards the father[46]; violence between adults in the home[47]; physical abuse of the child[48]; substance abuse by parent(s)[49]; negative home life[50]; a poor relationship between the youth and parent(s)[51]; physical neglect of the child[52]; lower levels of cohesion in family interaction[53]; and regular extended absence from home by fathers, and to a lesser degree by mothers, usually related to seasonal and shift employment.[54] The literature also reports a high incidence of sexually exploited youth having grown up in a foster home or some form of care.[55]

The Canadians Brannigan and Van Brunschot (1997) compared a group of females involved in prostitution with a young college group on a number of family-background factors. Those involved in prostitution reported higher levels on "virtually every dimension explored," including sexual and physical abuse, parental drug and alcohol abuse, non-traditional family structure, school difficulties and conflict, lower levels of completed education and a higher level of running-away behaviour.[56] However, they found that only negative home life and "sexual precocity" (sexual experience before age 14) were predictors of involvement in prostitution. They concluded that the occurrence of trauma is not itself a sufficient explanation, but that any trauma which detaches children from their families increases the likelihood of delinquency and involvement in prostitution.

School Attendance

The school history of sexually exploited youth has been described as mirroring that of their family life in its failure to provide a source of constancy or positive experience and attachment (Price, 1989). Youth who become involved in prostitution are likely to have a history of low performance and attendance, are bored by and in conflict with teachers, and drop out or are expelled before completing high school, frequently in association with leaving home.[57] Badgley (1984) reported that four out of five participants in the Survey of Juvenile Prostitution were no longer attending school, and the majority had completed less education than would be expected at their age.

While a low level of school achievement and early departure are common in the literature, it is also not uncommon for sexually exploited youth to continue to attend school or work after they become involved in prostitution.[58] A recent Canadian consultation with sexually exploited youth reported that "a growing number of Canadian youth are living 'double lives,' attending school during the day while working the streets at night."[59]

Leaving Home at an Early Age

Among street youth who become involved in prostitution, the literature reports a high incidence of repeated running away and eventually leaving the family home for the street at an early age.[60] In the Juvenile Prostitution Survey reported on by Badgley, for example, three-quarters of females and an even higher proportion of males had run away from home on at least one occasion. As Weisberg (1985) observes, most youth who run away leave home without plans and without money, and are thus vulnerable to sexual exploitation and other risks of street life.

Estimates vary of the proportion of youth living on the street who become involved in prostitution. While prostitution may be one of many socially deviant activities undertaken for survival, only a small percentage of street youth become involved.[61] A Boston program (Price, 1989) reported that fewer than 20 per cent of street youth served by the program engaged in prostitution, while a study of 156 homeless youth in a midwestern U.S. city in the early '90s found that only nine per cent became involved in prostitution.[62]

While most youth who leave home at an early age to live on the street do not become involved in prostitution, living on the street places youth at great risk. They have to find the means of meeting basic survival needs—money, shelter and food—and street life leads them into association with others who are already involved.

Most youth involved in prostitution have been influenced by a friend or can identify a particular person who introduced them to prostitution.[63] In his 1992 study of 152 Vancouver street youth, McCarthy (1995) reported that close to half had received at least one offer of assistance to help them work in prostitution. As Hagan and McCarthy (1998) observe, living on the street both requires and provides opportunities for learning the skills of survival including prostitution, through association with those who are already experienced in the street culture.

Studies confirm that the survival needs associated with living on the street lead many into prostitution. In a study of 75 sexually exploited youth in Victoria, B.C., almost half of them said they were living on the street when they first began trading sex for favours, and one-third of them traded sex for shelter (CRD, 1997). In a California study of street youth, Pennridge, Freeze and MacKenzie (1992) found that 17 per cent of street youth had engaged in sex in return for money, drugs, shelter, food or clothes. The drift into prostitution to meet basic needs, once living on the street, is also reported by Badgley, Michaud, PEERS and Weisberg.[64]

Studies of street youth in Vancouver[65] and Toronto[66] found a high rate of involvement in crime including prostitution, as one means of obtaining money for survival needs. The factors most strongly associated with street youth involvement in prostitution were unemployment and need for shelter and food. The studies also observed gender differences, with male youth more likely to steal for food and females more likely to work in the sex trade. Prostitution was also found to be more common among street youth in Vancouver than in Toronto and, correspondingly, Vancouver youth spent about one-third more nights on the street than Toronto youth. Hagan and McCarthy attributed this difference to the relatively fewer shelters and support services in Vancouver than in Toronto.

Gay and Lesbian Youth

Research suggests that homosexuality is associated with entry into prostitution for males.[67] Canadian researchers Earls and David compared youth and adult males involved in prostitution with a group of males of similar age who were not involved, and found a significant difference in both the sex of the first sexual partner and the stated sexual orientation. Most males involved in prostitution considered themselves to be either homosexual or bisexual, and their first sexual partner (outside the family) was male.

Findings conflict on the association between homosexuality and entry into prostitution. Earls and David (1990) compared data on females involved in prostitution with females who weren't involved, and found no significant difference in either sexual preference or first sexual partner between the two groups. On the other hand, Yates et al. (1991) compared homeless youth involved in prostitution with homeless youth who were not involved, the majority of both groups being female. They reported that youth involved in prostitution were more than five times as likely to report a homosexual or bisexual identity.

The association between male homosexuality and prostitution has been attributed not to their sexual orientation per se, but to the social disapproval of homosexuality. The resulting sense of isolation and rejection can, in turn, lead to the same cycle of running away and prostitution that is related to early sexual abuse.[68] Bagley (1997) cites a review of homosexual youth studies suggesting that the verbal and physical abuse experienced by lesbian and gay youth at home and at school is associated with a number of problems in adolescence, including alienation, running away and prostitution.

The consequences of society's homophobia are not the only explanation for gay male youth involvement in prostitution. Some studies have concluded that male prostitution is related to the development of a homosexual identity[69], an association also suggested in Earls and David's findings. A study by Boyer[70] concluded that street life and prostitution are part of the stereotypic image of gay homosexuality. They propose that involvement in prostitution is one of the few links to the gay community for young gay males, providing them with a means of self-recognition and of practicing being gay.

7. CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH PROSTITUTION

A. Reasons for Involvement

The relationship between economic need and youth sexual exploitation is demonstrated by studies that examine the reasons why youth engage in prostitution. When youth are asked why they first became involved, money is most often the reason cited[71], and it is also commonly cited as a reason for remaining involved and being unable to exit.[72]. Nearly 90 per cent of youth interviewed by Silbert and Pines[73] cited factors related to basic financial survival as their motivation for entry, and a large majority reported that they had no other options. Badgley (1984) also reported that the reasons for entry most often cited by both females and males were related to economic need (rapid financial gain and the inability to find employment). The 1997 CRD study did not inquire about the reasons why youth became involved; but, when asked what sex was traded for, more than four out of five youth reported money, and a large majority cited other exchanges relating to economic need including shelter, food, clothing and transportation. For many teenage females, pregnancy and the resulting financial demands of parenting are attributed with leading them into prostitution.[74]

Economic need alone does not adequately explain involvement in prostitution, given the large numbers of unemployed, homeless youth who do not become involved.

Examining the link between homelessness and prostitution, for example, Pitts (1997) recognizes the role of individual factors such as sexual abuse and running away. However, he concludes that poverty plays a determining influence on the choices that young people make, observing, for example, that most young people living on the street probably resort to crime, drugs and/or prostitution within six weeks as a means of survival.

The association of drug use with youth prostitution is evident in the significant proportion of youth citing the need for money for drugs as a reason for first involvement, or as a reason for trading sex.[75] While not specifically citing the need for money, one in eight respondents to the National Survey of Juvenile Prostitution cited "a problem with drugs" as a reason for becoming involved.

Other reasons youth give for becoming involved in prostitution include control by a pimp[76], power[77], discontent with school, inability to cope with parents, personal trauma[78], and the perception of prostitution as a glamorous trade.[79]

The Badgley report includes some notable differences in the reasons given by females and males. The second most common reason cited by females was "to please another person" (cited as often as unemployment), while none of the males cited this as a reason. While this might suggest pimp coercion, only a very small percentage cited "forced by a pimp" as a reason, perhaps indicating reluctance by girls to admit to pimp control as well as sense of powerlessness and lack of control over their lives. Other notable differences included females reporting parental problems more often, and males reporting "problems with drugs" more often. The differences in reasons for involvement indicate the need for different approaches in services and supports for female and male sexually exploited youth.

The reasons outlined above are reflected in a model developed by Mathews (1987) to explain youth entrance and entrenchment in street prostitution, based on five categories: needs, skills, values, models and subculture. In his model, youth become involved because of 1) economic and status needs; 2) lack of employment options because of low education, lack of job history and youth unemployment; 3) similar values to others in terms of seeking material comforts, independence, etc., but choosing a different means because the socially acceptable options are not open to them or are financially and otherwise unattractive, and the rewards of prostitution outweigh the risks; 4) association with others who are involved; and 5) the familiarity and freedom of street life.

B. Location

Research on sexually exploited youth has almost exclusively focused on those involved in street prostitution, and we know little about the extent of youth prostitution in other venues.

The CRD study (1997) was one of the few to provide detailed information on the locations where youth prostitution takes place. While the street was found to be the most common location for two-thirds of youth interviewed, youth reported trading sex in a variety of indoor venues including bars, escort agencies and the youth's home, or by working as an independent escort. An unexpected finding was that almost all youth who worked out of an escort agency also traded sex on the street. The range of venues where youth sexual exploitation occurs was also observed in a consultation with Canadian sexually exploited youth.[80]

A youth interviewed for the Out From the Shadows[81] consultation observed that "the street is only the tip of the iceberg," also noting that "it's usually youth who have run away from abuse of some sort who end up experiencing the violence and danger of the street trade," suggesting that the most vulnerable youth are indeed working on the street. PEERS (1997) observed that "fewer than 10 per cent of prostitutes, including teen prostitutes, ever work or live on the street," while respondents in a consultation by the City of Burnaby (1998) estimated that only 20 per cent of sexually exploited children and youth work on the street. Overall, the literature provides mixed conclusions about the situations in which youth sexual exploitation takes place, highlighting the need for better information to ensure that services reach all sexually exploited youth.

C. Risks

Sexually exploited youth are exposed to a number of serious risks to their physical and emotional well being. The most frequently cited risks include drug abuse, physical and sexual violence, and other physical and emotional health risks.

Drug Use

Substance use, involving multiple drug use for some, is common among youth involved in prostitution.[82] Badgley (1984) reported that one in four youth involved in prostitution consumed heavy amounts of alcohol, and one in three was a drug user. The substances most frequently used are alcohol and marijuana, but the use of other drugs including hallucinogens, stimulants, inhalants and narcotics is common, and intravenous drug use has been reported by up to a quarter of sexually exploited youth.[83]

While there is a high incidence of substance use and abuse among youth involved in prostitution, the research provides mixed evidence of the extent of substance abuse prior to entry, and whether obtaining money for drugs is the initial primary motivation for selling sex.

While the need to obtain money for drugs is one of the initial motivations for selling sex for some youth[84], drug use becomes a primary reason for continuing involvement of many youth. In a recent study of a small group of female youth involved in prostitution in Vancouver, just over half reported that "money for drugs" was a perceived benefit at time of entry, but all participants cited this as a benefit after a period of involvement.[85] According to Price (1989), while most street youth do not become involved in prostitution, the great majority of those who do are far more likely to become active substance abusers.

A consultation with sexually exploited youth across Canada[86] reported that drug addiction is "pervasive in the lives of many sexually exploited children and youth." The report observed that many turned to prostitution to support their habit, adding, "juvenile prostitutes usually turn to drugs to block the pain and shame of prostitution." Similarly, Price (1989) reported that most youth who sell sex spent much of their money on drugs or alcohol as a means of coping with the painful feelings and low self-esteem that result from prostitution, and as a shelter from the painful memories of childhood sexual abuse that lead many youth to the street and then into prostitution.

Physical and Sexual Violence

Involvement in prostitution carries a high risk of both physical and sexual violence from customers, pimps, other sex workers and passers-by. In a study of 60 adults and youth in Vancouver's downtown eastside [87], three-quarters reported that they had experienced violence in the previous six months. The types of violence included sexual assault, beatings and assaults (by boyfriends, customers, other sex trade workers and others) and assault with a weapon. Other forms of violence reported by a small proportion (fewer than 10 per cent) included being dragged by a car, held against their will or strangled, or beaten by police.

While this study reflects the experience of both adults and youth combined, research with sexually exploited youth indicates that sexual and physical violence and emotional abuse are a common experience. Badgley (1984) reported that about two-thirds of females and half the male youth had been physically assaulted while working on the street. Among youth interviewed for the 1997 CRD study who were working both on the street and in indoor venues, more than two out of five had experienced at least one incident of sexual assault and physical assault while trading sexual favours, and two-thirds had experienced emotional abuse. Other commonly reported experiences included being dropped off in remote locations after a "date" and theft of property. Youth who provided information about the perpetrator cited a customer ("date" or "trick") in the great majority of these experiences; but pimps, agency managers, other workers and passers-by were also cited.

Sexually exploited youth do not generally regard police as a source of protection. They cite distrust, harassment, fear of arrest and in some cases being beaten as reasons for their negative attitudes towards the police.[88]

Youth may not be sufficiently aware of the physical risks of prostitution when they first become involved, but awareness and concern increase substantially over a period of involvement, as Scott (1998) demonstrated through interviews with a small group of predominantly female youth at a drop-in centre in Vancouver's downtown eastside. Asked about perceived risks when first involved, just over half cited physical assault, whereas all cited it as a risk at the time of interview. Even more striking was the substantial increase from first involvement to the time of interview, in the proportion citing murder as a risk.

The high incidence of physical and sexual violence experienced by sexually exploited youth led the Youth

Advocate Program International (1998) to suggest that "bringing prostituted children to a point where they have enough self-esteem to be concerned about their personal safety is the first major milestone in any reintegration program."[89]

Health Risks

There is little research on the health risks associated with youth involvement in commercial sex, and most of it focuses on the risk of HIV infection and AIDS, especially among gay youth.[90] However, the literature refers to a number of serious health risks for sexually exploited youth.

Commercial sex, especially when unprotected, places sexually exploited youth at high risk of infection from sexually transmitted diseases including gonorrhea, herpes and syphilis, as well as HIV infection and AIDS. The risk is even greater for youth than for adults, because their body tissues are more easily damaged.[91] For females, there is the additional risk of pregnancy—which may also lead pimps and customers to physically and sexually abuse them precisely because of their pregnancy—and pelvic inflammatory disease.[92] Other health problems reported in the literature include dermatology problems and uncontrolled asthma.[93]

Behaviours that pose a high risk to health are inherent in prostitution and have been reported as a concern by a high proportion of sexually exploited youth.[94] In Scott's 1998 study, the proportion of youth who perceived STD/HIV infection as a risk more than doubled from time of first involvement to time of interview.

A range of emotional and mental-health problems are reported by sexually exploited youth. These problems may be with them while they become involved and worsen through involvement, or they may develop as a result of involvement. As we noted, a low sense of self-worth resulting from childhood abuse is one of the psychological factors that leads some youth into prostitution. However, some sexually exploited youth report that low self-esteem develops after they became involved in prostitution as a result of harassment and negative judgments from police, social workers and others.[95] Other mental-health problems reported in the literature include a sense of powerlessness and betrayal, depression, disassociation of emotions from memory, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, manic depression and schizophrenia.[96] The CRD study found that youth who had a mental-disorder diagnosis reported significantly more emotional and verbal abuse while trading sex than other youth.

While sexually exploited youth may have fears for their health, the nature of their work and the need to sell sex for basic economic survival may be of more immediate concern than their health, particularly when customers will offer to pay more for unprotected sex. Mathews (1987) found that many youth were aware of the risks when they first became involved, but felt that the rewards made the work worthwhile. Johnson et al (1996) found a high incidence of risky behaviour among homeless youth, including those engaging in prostitution, and observed that "the concern with meeting their basic survival needs often extinguishes concern with health risks, particularly those that will not manifest themselves for many years."[97]

Control by Pimp

Perhaps one of the most distinctive differences between female and male youth sexual exploitation is that females who work on the street are more likely to be controlled by a pimp—although this is not the case for all female youth, nor do all male youth operate independently.[98] The extent of pimp involvement appears to vary according to the geographic location.[99] Pimps are almost always, but not exclusively, male.[100] To avoid police detection, pimps will move youth from one jurisdiction to another.[101]

Badgley and others refer to the difficulty of obtaining an accurate picture of the extent of pimp involvement, because many females fear retaliation if they acknowledge that they work for a pimp. Estimates of the proportion of female youth who work for a pimp range from 10 per cent[102] to as high as 90 per cent at some time during their involvement.[103] Mathews (1987) reports estimates of between 30 per cent and 70 per cent of youth working for a pimp.

Out from the Shadows[104] connects low self-esteem, drug use and vulnerability to pimp coercion, citing this connection as a major contributing factor to the sexual exploitation of youth. As we noted, female youth are more likely than male youth to have been sexually abused, and the psychological effects of this earlier experience make female youth particularly vulnerable to control by a pimp.

Pimps play a major role in keeping youth involved, primarily through the emotional and financial dependency that develops, but also through physical control and violence.[105] Pimps are also a primary source of supply for drugs and alcohol, which establishes a cycle of drug use, drug dependency and prostitution to support the need for drugs.[106]

As the 1997 CRD study shows, proceeds from the trading of sexual favours are used to support not only pimps but others as well, such as a partner, a friend and, in some instances, a parent, relative or other person. The different circumstances of involvement for female and male youth, and the complex relationships that develop, are particularly apparent from the female responses in this study, half of them reporting that they support another person, while only one in eight males reported trading sexual favours to support another person.

As the preceding sections have demonstrated, youth who are sexually exploited have usually been victimized and marginalized from an early age, and their involvement in prostitution places them at high risk for a range of health and safety problems. The sexual exploitation of youth is a reflection of wide-ranging and complex problems in society, and requires a committed and systematic strategy at all levels of society to prevent further sexual exploitation of youth and to provide youth already involved with the support they need to make healthy choices for the future.

8. RESPONDING TO YOUTH SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The following sections provide an overview of programs and approaches for addressing the problem of youth sexual exploitation, organized under the themes of prevention, intervention and exiting programs. Before addressing programs, however, we present an overview of initiatives and recommendations to amend existing legislation and policy at the various levels of government. These initiatives provide the legislative and policy framework for society's response to the sexual exploitation of youth, and have potential impact in the areas of both prevention and intervention.

A. Legal and Policy Initiatives

Increased attention to the issue of youth sexual exploitation in Canada over the past few years has resulted in a number of reports at the federal and provincial level, and by municipalities. The reports are intended to provide a framework for action at the federal, provincial and community levels, according to their different responsibilities, and to draw guidance from existing literature, sponsored research and, in some cases, a degree of community and/or youth consultation.

A consistent recommendation regarding the sexual exploitation of youth is the need for legal strategies and effective law enforcement to deter commercial sex involving youth.[107]

The academic literature provides few references to the legal context in which the sexual exploitation of youth occurs or the effectiveness of legal approaches in general. Following his examination of juvenile prostitution in Canada, Badgley (1984) recommended that the Criminal Code be amended to criminalize youth who engaged in commercial sex, as part of a combined therapeutic-legalistic approach to the problem. Brannigan and Fleischman (1989) concluded that adolescent involvement in prostitution is essentially a choice of opportunity, and similarly advocated that law and law enforcement should focus on the sellers rather than the buyers of sex. The youth criminalization approach was broadly criticized as mistargeted and ineffective by the Canadian Child Welfare Association and others who advocate on behalf of youth and who view youth prostitution as a product of broader social problems that create both the conditions for youth vulnerability and the demand for commercial sex.[108]

In recent years, amendments have been made to the Canadian Criminal Code, primarily targeting the purchasers and the activities associated with commercial sex. The current legal framework is complex, making some aspects of commercial sex legal and others not. Prostitution itself is legal; but operating a bawdy house, living on the avails of prostitution and procuring, soliciting and communicating for the purposes of illegal sexual activity are illegal. With particular reference to youth, it is not illegal to have sex with a youth 14 or older (unless the adult is in a position of trust or

authority), but it is illegal to buy or obtain for consideration the sexual services of a person under 18.

A 1985 amendment to the Canadian Criminal Code (Bill C-49) made it illegal to communicate with another person for the purpose of obtaining the services of a prostitute. In 1989, the Department of Justice evaluated the amendment's impact during its first two years in force, in several localities across Canada. The evaluation mainly addressed the amendment's impact on adult street prostitution and gave limited attention to the impact on youth involvement.

Of those arrested under the new law during the two years after implementation, 10 to 15 per cent were of young offender age, the majority of them 16 or 17 years old. While the report suggests that the law had some positive results, it also observed that the law was expected to have the effect of displacing street prostitution to indoor venues; but that information could not be obtained to determine the extent to which this had occurred.[109]

Criminal justice respondents generally viewed Bill C-49 as being beneficial in dealing with sexually exploited youth, by providing an "initial hook" that gave professionals some ability to establish control and structure in the lives of these youth.[110] Evaluating Bill C-49 in Vancouver, social-service providers generally agreed that the law was of some benefit in this regard, especially in dealing with high-risk youth, since there were no other legal means of intervention available. However, most of them also felt that prosecution had little impact on the overall practice of youth prostitution and may even further entrench some youth in street life by "consolidating their 'outlaw' identity'."[111] They questioned the appropriateness of a punitive, criminal justice approach to youth, who should be viewed as victims, while giving little attention to the purchasers of sex. Social workers called for a range of intervention responses for sexually exploited youth, with criminal prosecution as a last resort.

Recent federal/provincial and municipal reports have proposed a range of recommendations for legal and policy amendments to address the problem of youth sexual exploitation.[112]

While it is not appropriate to present here the full range of recommendations, we provide a brief picture of legal and policy options at all three levels of government. Recommendations that fall within national jurisdiction (in some cases overlapping with provincial jurisdiction) include Criminal Code amendments and other means to strengthen the ability to charge and prosecute pimps and customers of youth. They include making it safer and easier for youth to cooperate with police and the courts; increased sentences for sexual procurement of youth under 18; Criminal Code amendments to increase the age of consent for sexual relations from 14 to 18 years; Uniform Crime Report collection of data relating to sexual procurement of youth offences; a nationwide system for tracking sexually exploited youth; and training strategies for criminal justice personnel to increase their awareness of youth sexual exploitation.

B.C. provincial recommendations include proclaiming the youth services provision of B.C.'s *Child, Family and Community Service Act;* including sexual exploitation in B.C.'s child-protection risk assessment tool; improving coordination among youth-serving agencies; an integrated and coordinated case management approach; and developing a provincial services database. Municipal recommendations include by-law revisions to regulate massage parlours and other businesses where youth sexual exploitation is likely to take place.

In response to the growing problem of international child sex tourism, a number of countries including Australia, Canada, Sweden and the United States have recently enacted laws that provide stiff penalties for national residents who engage in paid sexual acts with a youth while travelling outside the country. Advocates for sexually exploited youth regard this approach as a necessary and welcome strategy, but it has resulted in few convictions to date. In Australia, for example, there were six arrests in the first three years of operation of the child sex tourism legislation, resulting in two convictions.[113] While such legislation may represent an important symbolic step against child sex tourism, its effectiveness is hindered by the complexities of international law enforcement, including restrictive extradition laws and evidence standards.[114]

B. Programs and Services to Address Youth Sexual Exploitation

Academic literature has mainly focused on the factors associated with youth entry into prostitution. Some of this literature contains suggested approaches to addressing the problem of youth sexual exploitation, but these

suggestions are usually brief and very broad (e.g., programs to address substance abuse) and are incorporated in a concluding discussion of research findings. Solutions that have been demonstrated through practice are almost absent in the literature.

The publications of international bodies and conferences are also accessible through a literature search. While international reports contain recommendations for addressing the problem of youth sexual exploitation, they are generally very broad in focus. The Declaration and Agenda for Action of the 1996 World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children[115], for example, provides a broad framework for action but little guidance in terms of program development. The Declaration recommended high priority and funding for action against child sexual exploitation; criminalizing the commercial exploitation of children; strengthening communication and cooperation among law enforcement authorities; public education and mobilization; and encouraging broad participation, especially from youth, in preventing and eliminating the problem.

As we noted, a number of federal, provincial and municipal reports have recently been produced in Canada in response to the problem of youth sexual exploitation. They provide a wealth of information, identify needed services and programs, and present a wide array of recommendations in the areas of prevention, intervention and exiting. British Columbia localities that have developed reports include Burnaby, Kamloops, Kelowna, New Westminster, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Vancouver and Victoria.

The proposals in these reports, along with recommendations developed by Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Youth Activity Society[116] and the Out From the Shadows[117] national consultation, have been compiled by issue and organized according to their application to the various provincial ministries, for consideration by the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Prostitution Work Group[118], and will not be reviewed here.

Given the increased attention to the problem of youth sexual exploitation, there are undoubtedly similar government reports in other jurisdictions inside and outside Canada that, like the reports referred to here, contain a wealth of information and recommendations, but have not been published in the academic sphere.

Existing Programs and Services

There is little evidence in the literature of systematic evaluation of existing programs to address youth sexual exploitation in terms of prevention, intervention or exiting. Brief references in the literature confirm the existence of ongoing programs. However, even those that have been in operation for a lengthy period of time do not appear to have been examined independently or systematically, or at least there is little evidence of this in the academic literature.

An example is the Connecticut-based "Paul and Lisa Program" in operation since 1980. According to the Paul and Lisa Internet site, the program provides street outreach to sexually exploited youth, offers prevention and public-education programs, publishes a magazine and provides professional training. It currently operates a community-based alternate court-sentencing "model program" for young females who have been arrested as a result of their involvement in prostitution, and offers such tools as a guide to youth prostitution assessment and response for communities. The program has received attention in popular magazines such as Ladies' Home Journal and Readers Digest, and is described on its Internet site as having benefited a quarter of a million people through its prevention and early intervention services. Despite its ongoing operation for nearly two decades, however, a search of academic journals failed to yield any references to the program.

Another long-standing U.S. program, "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" in Boston, has been in operation for 17 years and is described in the academic literature; but there appears to be no external systematic evaluation of the program. Described as having a national reputation for providing services to homeless youth, including those involved in prostitution, the program provides street outreach, medical care, runaway services and drop-in counseling, with the objective of enabling youth to become independent of street life. The program emphasizes the need for developing a relationship of safety and trust, observing that the manner in which the services are offered may be more important than the services themselves.[119]

A recent British collection of six articles edited by Barrett (1997) appears to be the first academic publication to focus specifically on "practical" responses to child prostitution. It addresses broad practice areas including legal and criminal

enforcement, and services currently offered in selected agencies, including health-care initiatives. Again, however, while the programs are described as being effective in their approach, no data are provided by which program providers may review these internal assessments.

A rare example of an evaluated intervention program for sexually exploited youth is a Seattle-based short-term, drop-in school experience for 144 prostitution-involved youth.[120] The school program emphasized positive interaction between students and teachers, cooperation among students, and achievement of identifiable goals. Pre- and post-tests on three groups of youth—those who chose to participate, those who wished to participate but were unable to, and those who refused to participate—measured depression, self-esteem, attitudes toward school and prostitution events to determine the impact of the school experience.

While all groups had low measures of self-esteem on first measurement—attributed to the high incidence of childhood sexual abuse—and high measures of depression, the school-refuser group had significantly lower self-esteem and significantly higher depression scores. Fifty days later, all three groups showed increased self-esteem, attributed to program participation and staff attention for testing purposes. On other measures, only the school attendees showed significantly reduced depression, significantly improved school attitudes and a significant decline in prostitution events.

Youth who refused to participate were younger than the other two groups, had experienced sexual and physical abuse at an earlier age, and had been younger at first runaway from home. The researchers linked their refusal to accept services to their more negative socialization, which placed them at highest risk for entrenchment in street life and prostitution.

While the program's results are limited by its short-term nature and the consequent lack of information about durability of changes, the program's success suggested to the researchers that youth involved in prostitution can benefit from programs that incorporate an educational component and foster skill development.

In another Seattle-based program, young women who had been or still were living on the street, some of whom were involved in prostitution, were involved in a counseling therapy program.[121] Pre- and post-tests showed significant increases in problem-solving skills and health knowledge, and a measurable but not significant increase in self-esteem, suggesting that counseling had some benefit. No information was provided on whether the program reduced involvement in prostitution, or whether the changes were lasting.

Recommended Approaches to Supporting Sexually Exploited Youth

While the literature provides little empirical information on the effectiveness of existing programs, a number of themes for needed approaches emerge from the academic literature and consultations with sexually exploited youth. These include the provision of youth-oriented services, a multi-service agency approach, involvement of youth in program development, the incorporation of peer support, and the need for a continuum of services designed to meet the immediate needs of youth involved in prostitution while at the same time providing support for those who are ready to consider exiting.

Youth-Oriented Services

To the extent that they are available, services are not tailored to the particular circumstances and needs of sexually exploited youth.[122] Youth report that they avoid using existing services because they do not feel safe revealing their prostitution activities.[123] In addition, available support services such as drug-abuse programs are not geared to suit the reality of youth and adult experiences typical of youth involved in prostitution. As observed by PEERS (1997), these youth are on the margins of both youth and adult society, engaged in activities that give them adult responsibilities while still at an age where they have the same needs for support and caring as other youth.

While recognizing that sexually exploited youth have particular circumstances which require special consideration, Shaw and Butler (1998) caution against providing services designed specifically for sexually exploited youth. They suggest that this approach may "overemphasize the dissimilarities between these young people and others for whom services may be...needed, when it is their similarities which should be to the fore." Not only do sexually exploited youth share many of the same circumstances of other youth needing services, such as homelessness and poverty, but

differentiated services may attract workers who are "more inclined to moralize than to help."[124]

Multi-Service Agency Approach

Shaw and Butler propose that integrating all youth services through an inter-agency approach will enable services to cross the blurred boundaries between sexually exploited and other youth needing services, increase efficiency in training professionals, support professionals working in different areas, and foster awareness among staff working in related fields. Services need to guarantee confidentiality, emphasize youth empowerment, and incorporate adequate staff support and the development of practice guidelines, in recognition of the difficult and special nature of the work.

A youth-services approach adopted in some English jurisdictions incorporates the service principles recommended by Shaw and Butler. The youth service is described as a multi-agency service "largely concerned with the informal social education of young people."[125] The service uses a holistic approach, recognizing that young people's needs are interrelated—so that, for example, health, counseling, employment, and information services are all accessed through a single worker. Through inter-agency cooperation, youth workers facilitate the provision of a range of services including peer education (e.g., training youth volunteers to work as sexual-health educators with young people), harm reduction (e.g., distributing condoms to encourage safer sex), preventive work (e.g., developing a role model/mentoring relationship to discourage young people from taking risks), and crisis intervention (e.g., addressing immediate needs for food and shelter). Shaw and Butler emphasize the importance of both the multi-service approach (especially in relation to health services) and a "youth-service philosophy" as essential for dealing with the complexities of working with those involved in prostitution. While the authors provide no empirical information on the effectiveness of this approach, they point to a number of existing services that now look to the youth-service approach for models of good practice, and identify a need for participatory action research to identify the most effective interventions.

A multi-agency, holistic approach and youth empowerment are also key principles in an account of recent approaches to providing health services for sexually exploited youth in England.[126] The authors note the need for alternate approaches because sexually exploited youth are often reluctant to access conventional health services for fear of stigma and legal repercussions. Medical-outreach services for street youth involved in prostitution in several cities meet immediate health and safer-sex needs, and use a multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates a wide range of services including drop-in centres, advice lines, health education, and referral to health and social services. In one city, the multidisciplinary health-care approach incorporated a pilot program featuring peer education on safer sex for young, sexually exploited female drug users, with positive outcomes including the sharing of information between those involved in prostitution and street workers.

Youth Involvement in Program Development

Consultations with sexually exploited youth emphasize the benefits of involving youth who have experience in prostitution in the development of services. These youth are familiar with the particular difficulties that sexually exploited youth face, and the types of services and resources that are needed to support them while they are involved and assist those who choose to exit. Services developed in consultation with knowledgeable youth are therefore more likely to reflect the needs of sexually exploited youth.[127]

Peer Support

A common theme in youths' accounts of their experience with service agencies is that they have felt misunderstood, distrusted and controlled. Moreover, youth have indicated that programs based on peer support, provided by youth who have a personal understanding of the circumstances and experiences of sexually exploited youth, are more likely to be accessed by youth.[128] Peer-support workers need to be carefully selected for their own emotional readiness to support others, and be given the training they need to supplement existing knowledge and skills and prepare them for such work.

Peer support is a basic principle of a program in Victoria, B.C., operated by PEERS (Prostitutes Empowerment, Education and Resource Society) that provides crisis intervention, ongoing support and advocacy. The services provided by PEERS have not been systematically evaluated

for their effectiveness or impact. However, the agency is recognized as a valuable service by local youth involved in prostitution, as well as the community network of youth-serving agencies. It was recently reported that seven out of 10 women did not want to continue their involvement in prostitution after participating in the program.[129]

Continuum of Services

Information obtained through consultations with youth highlights the need for a range of services to meet the immediate needs of sexually exploited youth in crisis, while laying a foundation of practical and emotional support that will help those who are ready to make the choice to exit.[130] For some purposes, programs and services need to be viewed as addressing the areas of prevention, intervention or exiting. The literature suggests, however, that in practice there is no such clear division into service categories, from the perspective of youth involved in prostitution. For example, they may need services (e.g., drug and alcohol treatment) that could be considered either as a preventive service or as a support to exiting, or both. Positive contact with a crisis intervention service may enable some to consider making the decision to end their involvement in prostitution, leading to immediate need of "exit" services (e.g., counseling) to support them in their decision.

The multi-service agency approaches described earlier are examples of a service model that meets the varied needs of sexually exploited youth.

A Model for Prevention and Services

A relatively recent and abundant source for guidance in program development is the body of information emerging through consultations with sexually exploited youth. Recommendations from youth, based on personal experience and their knowledge of the experience of other sexually exploited youth, provide valuable guidance to government in developing a framework for policy and program development.

Many of the recommendations in the report to the ADMs' Committee on Prostitution and Sexually Exploited Youth were developed, at least in part, through consultations with youth; and others were obtained directly from reports of consultations with youth.[131]

The sections below provide a brief overview of prevention-related issues and recommendations, followed by a model of services and programs for sexually exploited youth. Specific proposals are primarily drawn from proposals developed by PEERS (1997), following consultations with 24 Victoria-based former and current sexually exploited teens, as well as discussions with youth in high school and at the local detention centre.[132] The consultations were conducted to elicit proposals for addressing the problems faced by sexually exploited youth and to reduce the likelihood of today's youth becoming sexually exploited in the future.

Prevention

Prevention strategies need to address both structural and individual factors that create the conditions for youth sexual exploitation. As the literature indicates, the roots of the problem lie in a broad range of social problems such as poverty and economic inequity, youth unemployment, gender inequity, dysfunctional families, and the sexual and physical abuse and emotional neglect of children and youth. Strategies to prevent the conditions that lead to youth becoming involved in prostitution need to range from changes in government economic and social policies to public-education programs that foster healthy parenting approaches and healthy attitudes to sexuality.

The academic literature on youth sexual exploitation provides a wealth of information about the individual factors associated with entrance into prostitution, but yields no information on prevention programs specifically designed to address the problem. As these same factors are associated with a range of other social problems, other bodies of literature not reviewed for this report may provide some guidance—for example, research in the area of child sexual abuse prevention and 'stay in school' programs for youth.

In addition to broad prevention strategies aimed at finding the roots of the problem, strategies also need to be targeted to at-risk children and youth. Sexually exploited youth consulted by PEERS (1997) made a number of suggestions for activities they believed might have prevented them from entering the sex trade. The proposals, targeted primarily at high-risk children and youth and their families, include:

- More careful screening of adoption and foster homes
- Employment and mentoring programs for children and youth "in care," financial assistance and community connections
- Accessible and caring counseling and support for children and youth
- Counseling for all family members when a child or youth is identified as being in trouble
- Safe and welcoming place for youth who can't get along with their families, with support to stay in school or find a training program or employment, counseling, and without expectation that they reconcile with their family
- Residential drug and alcohol treatment centre for youth that provides long-term counseling, support and housing.

Intervention and Exiting

"Intervention" refers to services and supports designed to meet the needs of youth while they are involved in prostitution. Given the safety, and physical and mental health risks associated with prostitution, along with the marginalized economic and social circumstances of sexually exploited youth, a broad range of intervention supports is needed to respond to crisis circumstances in relation to basic survival, health and safety needs.

The academic literature offers some guidance in terms of approaches and principles for service delivery for sexually exploited youth, as described in an earlier section. There is little evidence in the literature of systematic assessment of programs and services.

There is even less attention in the literature to the reasons why some youth choose to end their involvement in prostitution, how they are successful in making this change in their life, and what services will assist them in doing so. Youth themselves provide powerful testimony to the difficulty of the process and what is needed to support them.

The CRD study on 75 sexually exploited youth addressed this issue. Because the study defined sexually exploited youth as having traded sexual favours at some time in the past year, there were some respondents participating in the survey who had begun the exiting process.[133] These respondents provided information about exiting and the strategies that act as necessary barriers to further exploitation. The researchers concluded that exiting is a complex process, which can take several months or even years. Most of the youth that had exited noted the importance of outreach services, walk-in clinics and friends/family to facilitating changes in their lives. Those who had begun the exiting process advised others to stay away from alcohol and drugs if they wanted to exit the sex trade. They saw as crucial a 24-hour drop-in centre where one could receive emotional help and other services at all times. If a youth experienced a bad date and was in crisis, for example, s/he could receive help at a time that could be seen as a turning point in life. But there appears to be a large gap in research or systematic evaluation of programs or services developed to help youth exit prostitution.

Youth consultations offer obvious reasons why it is difficult to exit—the immediate need of money for survival, the lack of job skills and the lack of employment opportunities, supporting a drug dependency, the social isolation of prostitution, the friendships formed on the street, and so on. But youth who have successfully exited, or who are asked what would support them in exiting, have made it clear that developing trusted and supportive relationships through service contact during involvement is one of the key motivators for exiting.[134]

A model of service developed through consultations by PEERS (1997) recommends a continuum of supports and services for youth involved in prostitution targeted at harm reduction, crisis intervention and stabilization, together with services for healing and reintegration for those who had made the decision to exit. The service proposals reflect the types of services and needs identified in other youth consultations.[135]

Services recommended by PEERS would provide support to sexually exploited youth throughout their involvement and eventual exiting (for those who choose to do so) and would be designed to meet the following objectives:

Harm Reduction: reduce harm while youth are still actively involved in the trade

Crisis Intervention: deal with the crises and emergencies that result from being actively involved in the sex trade and that often act as a catalyst for the decision to exit the sex trade

Stabilization: provide support once someone has decided to begin the process of exiting prostitution

Healing: create a supportive environment that can provide an opportunity for long-term healing and retraining, and enable long-term planning to begin

Reintegration: provide ongoing support once youth are living independently.

Harm reduction services would reduce risks for sexually exploited youth in the areas of physical health (e.g., STD testing, needle exchange, outreach workers, "Bad Date" database, emergency rooms), mental health and healing (e.g., outreach workers, 24-hour targeted crisis line, drop-in crisis counseling, peer support services) and survival needs (e.g., safe emergency shelter, food vans, food banks, drop-ins, donation boxes, soup kitchens, storage space).

Crisis Intervention services would provide immediate support to deal with crisis situations. Some youth may continue to access these services for years. For others, a crisis may be the catalyst for a decision to exit the trade, and the youth would need to have support immediately available at that time. In addition to existing services such as detox, emergency rooms and pregnancy testing, physical health services would also include police protection; mental health services would include emergency mental health services, drop-in counseling, suicide prevention services, social workers, and outreach workers; and survival services would include specialized transition houses (up to 30-day stay), and food and clothing vouchers.

Stabilization services would support youth who have expressed a genuine interest in exiting but are not yet able to begin long-term planning. The greatest need at this time is for stable, supportive, extended-length (second-stage) housing, together with alcohol and drug services, recovery houses, advocacy services and other supports (e.g., peer support and counseling) that will enable them to begin healing.

Healing services would include supportive specialized housing; long-term counseling to support healing from long-term issues; life skills; and specialized education, training and work experiences.

Reintegration services would include support groups and individual counseling, possibly over a number of years, to provide support to youth who have exited from prostitution and are living independently but need ongoing support.

The model presented above illustrates the multi-level services needed to address the immediate needs of youth while they are involved in prostitution, and the range of resources needed to support them if they choose to exit and begin the difficult and lengthy process of healing and reintegration. Services need to be developed and delivered within the framework of principles outlined earlier, to avoid the barriers to service that youth have identified, and optimize their participation.

In developing programs and services for sexually exploited youth, particular consideration should be given to youth who are additionally marginalized by factors such as race and sexual orientation. A separate section below addresses issues of particular concern in relation to sexually exploited Aboriginal youth.

Lesbian and gay youth need the same range of services as other sexually exploited youth, but the services need to incorporate or be complemented by programs that address homophobia and its impact on youth involved in prostitution. These could include peer support programs for gay and lesbian youth that provide positive and healthy images of homosexuality, and support and healing programs to address the individual effects of homophobic abuse. A long-term objective would be to increase understanding and acceptance of lesbian and gay youth through support for programs such as PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gay Youth), and education programs to address homophobia in the schools and in service agencies.

9. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Research over the past two decades has produced a body of knowledge that has contributed to increasing awareness in government and society about the growing social problem of youth sexual exploitation. Research initially focused on understanding which youth become involved in prostitution, and there is now evidence that sexually exploited youth are likely to come from economically disadvantaged, multi-

problem families, have been abused sexually and physically as children, and leave school and home at an early age. Youth who leave home at an early age with little education are likely to end up living on the street and, through economic need and association with other street youth already involved, turn to prostitution as a means of survival. These youth become immersed in a subculture where drug use is common. For many, drug dependency and the means to obtain drugs through trading sex become reasons for remaining involved, and prevent them from being able to genuinely consider an alternative future.

A major focus of research has been the role of early sexual abuse in youth prostitution. The high incidence of sexual abuse among sexually exploited youth has led to debate in the literature about whether it is causally related and whether the relationship is direct or indirect. There appears to be consensus so far that sexual abuse is a primary reason for running away from home, but it is running to the street that leads to involvement in prostitution. At the same time, the psychological effects of early sexual abuse make youth vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Research has also focused on the circumstances of prostitution, providing evidence of a high incidence of physical and sexual violence, and serious risks to physical and emotional health. Substance use is common, and intravenous drug use, especially, carries additional serious risks.

There is evidence of significant gender differences between the reasons for entry and the risks associated with prostitution; for example, young women are particularly vulnerable to being controlled by a pimp, which creates an additional potential for violence and drug dependency, and are also likely to remain involved for a longer period of time than males. Gender differences indicate the need for services that understand and respond appropriately to these differences.

A number of methodological and conceptual weaknesses have been identified in the research, and generally it has not been based in a theoretical framework. Theoretical explanations have tended to focus on social psychological theories such as social learning theories and labeling theories which locate the problem at the individual level, although more recent research has begun to introduce a structural perspective, such as a feminist gender-inequity analysis.

Gaps in the knowledge base about sexually exploited youth include information about race and other marginalizing factors in relation to entry and the experience of prostitution itself. Some attention has been given to lesbian and gay youth. A fundamental knowledge gap that affects service response is the absence of reliable knowledge about the number of sexually exploited youth and the numbers of youth working in different venues. Research is needed to address these knowledge gaps.

Youth involved in prostitution are economically and socially marginalized, without the education, job skills or job experience needed to obtain a healthier means of supporting themselves. Recent youth consultations with Canadian sexually exploited youth indicate that youth want and need a wide range of supports and services while they are involved, and that they need long-term practical and emotional support to be able to consider and initiate the changes to their life that will enable them to successfully exit.

Despite the increasing attention to the problem of youth sexual exploitation in recent years, almost no information has been published in the literature about programs developed to serve sexually exploited youth, what services are offered, and whether they are effective—whether they be programs to provide crisis intervention, or programs to assist youth who want to exit. What is known from consultations with youth is that there is widespread reluctance to use existing services, because of past negative experiences with service providers and fear of harassment and judgment.

Information provided by sexually exploited youth and in the literature provides some guidance in terms of recommended approaches to the development and provision of services for sexually exploited youth. These include services that are designed for youth, to meet their particular needs and circumstances; a multi-service agency approach to enable youth-serving agencies to develop a shared knowledge of the needs of youth, including professional training; youth involvement in program development; peer support, and a continuum of services to meet the needs of sexually exploited youth during involvement and through the process of exiting and reintegration.

Governments have indicated that they are committed to working towards the prevention of youth sexual exploitation

and supporting those who are involved to create a healthier future for themselves. In order to ensure that resources are used to most effectively meet these objectives, a strategy for response needs to incorporate a program evaluation component. The development of demonstrated knowledge about effective ways of supporting sexually exploited youth will be a significant contribution to the existing knowledge base.

10. CONSULTATIONS WITH ABORIGINAL AGENCIES

A. Introduction[136]

The sexual exploitation of youth is an extremely complex issue that evokes powerful emotions. This report reflects an Aboriginal perspective on the issue. It attempts to promote an understanding of the complexities involved in dealing with the myriad social and health issues that burden Aboriginal communities. Many of these issues result from historical abuses and give rise to the high percentage of Aboriginal youth who are involved in activities or have heightened vulnerability which increases their risk of being sexually exploited.

It is impossible to overstate the impact of the loss of cultural identity in Aboriginal communities. Discriminatory policies and legislation such as the *Indian Act* "tend to see Indian people as property and [are] preoccupied with the control of that property."[137] The Act also serves as a discriminatory mechanism by defining whom is and who is not an "Indian." For example, the Act imposed a patriarchal model, with sections that further discriminated against aboriginal women through more restrictive definitions of "status" for women than for men. Enacted in 1876, the *Indian Act* is still in effect today.

Banning the Potlatch or Feasting system was also detrimental to the Aboriginal identity. Many do not realize that the Feast was not only imperative to passing on language and spirituality, but was also the government or political system. For example, matriarchal house systems existed on the coast of British Columbia. When two houses or house groups came into dispute about a specific issue such as territory, the issue was resolved in the Feast Hall with guests acting as "witnesses" who would affirm or contradict what they had heard. The Potlatch having to go underground for so many years meant children were prevented from being groomed to know their history. Although the ban is no longer in effect, it created internal conflicts within houses and house groups that still occur today.

Intergenerational social issues play a big part in Aboriginal involvement in prostitution. The residential school policy and the systems designed to implement it created an environment in which physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse and neglect were the norm. One effect of residential schools and the abuses suffered there was that children as young as four years old were brought up in an institutional context. When many of these children went back to their families and communities, they were unable to relate as members of a family, a community and a culture. As a result, the Aboriginal children subjected to these institutionalized settings often perpetuated these abuses and negative coping skills in subsequent generations. Generation after generation of children have been raised without role models to demonstrate good parenting skills. Along similar lines, it is noteworthy that suicide rates for registered Indian youth aged 15 to 24 are eight times higher than the national rate; and in British Columbia, 60 per cent of children in care who are 18 and under are Aboriginal.

Canadians need to know the impact of the unique relationship that Aboriginal people have had with Canada. The commissioned research and various submissions to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) record the historic suffering of Aboriginal people—the broken lives, shattered dreams and cultures in disarray. Although RCAP speaks to the form and impact of historic oppression, the report characterizes the present time in history as a period of renewal. It is in this context that the healing of Aboriginal people and communities will occur. It is also in this context that initiatives to deal with the issue of Aboriginal sexual exploitation need to occur.

It is evident that the collective consciousness of Aboriginal people is shifting. There is hope on the horizon as more and more individuals, families and communities participate in the healing movement that is sweeping the communities of the indigenous peoples of North Americas. Community healing needs collective, community action. Aboriginal people need to be involved in the government policy-making processes to ensure that policies can meet the needs of Aboriginal people and their communities. Moreover, in view of the complexity of the intergenerational social problems, a holistic framework

needs to be employed in debating and resolving the issues. Central to this framework is the idea that prevention is as important as intervention.

The federal government responded to RCAP with an initiative called "Gathering Strength: An Aboriginal Action Plan." One component of the federal response is the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), formed to administer the $350-million Residential School initiative. The AHF provides funding opportunities for counseling, community workshops, curriculum development for training and awareness of professionals, leadership training, and other individual and community based initiatives. It is a small step toward accountability to Aboriginal people; nonetheless, it is an important first step in dealing with the historic damage and cultural disarray. This is the right place to start, given the horrendous consequences of the residential school policy on generations of Aboriginal people.

Canada has recognized the need to renew its relationship with Aboriginal people. In 1982, the Constitution entrenched Aboriginal rights in Section 35. The Supreme Court of Canada's recognition of Aboriginal rights, including title, was reflected in the Delgamuukw decision handed down on December 11, 1997. These cases provide the larger framework for alternative policy.

The B.C. government is pursuing initiatives with Aboriginal people in a number of different areas (e.g., treaties, capacity building and National Aboriginal Youth Strategy) and working to build new relationships with Aboriginal peoples throughout British Columbia.

B. Literature Review–Aboriginal Youth

Research and anecdotal information suggest that Aboriginal youth are disproportionately represented among sexually exploited youth in Canada and elsewhere.[138] Despite their high level of involvement, a literature search revealed no research specifically addressing issues of Aboriginal sexually exploited youth. The search included academic journals, Aboriginal journals, a posted inquiry on a Canadian e-mail research discussion list, and an inquiry to an Aboriginal government officer who is a member of the working group for this project. The e-mail posting elicited a number of referrals to existing programs in various provincial jurisdictions for information on their services, but no research literature. A single reference relating specifically to Aboriginal youth prostitution was in an unavailable journal, and appeared to be a very brief opinion piece rather than a research report.

A more general search of Aboriginal literature will probably uncover reference to the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth and their involvement in prostitution, in a discussion of broader issues (e.g., in RCAP). A study of child welfare services for Native youth in Vancouver[139], for example, mentions youth prostitution. It estimated that most of the several thousand Native youth living in Vancouver were "problematic," and 200-300 were "hard core" street kids. These street kids were usually runaways from a reserve, and had a background of parental and alcohol abuse by their parents and themselves, school failure and chronic welfare. In order to survive, they turned to crime and prostitution because they lacked urban work skills; more specifically, girls turned to prostitution and shoplifting, while boys turned to car theft, stealing and running drugs. Ratner suggests that while there are no simple solutions, the long-term solutions are Aboriginal economic independence, and giving Aboriginals control over their child welfare and criminal justice services.

The absence of information on the experiences and needs of sexually exploited Aboriginal youth highlights the need for research, to assist the Aboriginal community in developing appropriate prevention and support programs.

C. Key Informants

Introduction

This report represents a thematic analysis of a set of interviews undertaken with a provincial group of Aboriginal[140] key informants, pertaining to the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children and youth in B.C. This component of the project was carried out with the recognition that while Aboriginal people are heavily represented among sexually exploited youth, there is a scarcity of literature focusing on Aboriginal youths' issues and experiences regarding sexual exploitation.

The primary objective of this component of the project was to gather preliminary information regarding:

- demographics of Aboriginal sexually exploited youth;
- risk factors that can give rise to Aboriginal youth's sexual exploitation;
- particular risk factors for Aboriginal youth involved as sex workers;
- existing services and supports for Aboriginal youth who are either at risk for sexual exploitation or already involved in the sex trade;
- service/support gaps and needs, and issues in service delivery; and
- guiding principles for Aboriginal youth programming.

In addition, the key informant interviews aimed to explore the contextual issues of sexual exploitation among Aboriginal children and youth, including their experiences in and efforts to exit the sex trade.

Audrey Lundquist and Nicole Jackson, both of whom belong to the Gitxsan Nation, conducted this component of the research. The Aboriginal team is knowledgeable about the myriad issues and complex challenges faced by Aboriginal communities in transitional times, including communities' efforts to access much-needed resources and to deliver effective and culturally appropriate programs and services.

Governments are increasingly recognizing that Aboriginal communities need to be meaningfully consulted about issues that affect their lives, and that consultation processes need to involve the people most affected by the issues. If this doesn't happen, government efforts to address the issues are more likely to fail. Respectful relationships with Aboriginal communities need to be established and maintained. Moreover, any government framework for action needs to reflect the recognition that inclusiveness and a true partnership approach are fundamental principles of the healing process.

Methodology

The consultants from the two project teams (our consultant group and the consultant team engaged in undertaking a "jurisdictional scan" of sexually exploited youth in B.C.) and Ministry of Attorney General (MAG) staff collaboratively developed the research plan for the key informant/ jurisdictional-scan components of the projects. The plan involved conducting one-hour interviews with one or two key informants in each of nine B.C. communities: Prince Rupert, Prince George, Kelowna, Kamloops, Vancouver, Whistler, Victoria, Nanaimo and Port Hardy. These communities are demographically diverse; nevertheless, sexual exploitation of youth was deemed to be a salient issue in all communities.

The Aboriginal consultants then developed a list of potential key informants in each community, drawing on their own knowledge of community leaders and practitioners. Overall, the consultants aimed at a cross section of participants with a variety of perspectives and experiences of the issues. The consultants knew many of these people personally as individuals actively involved with youth services, youth task groups, or youth advisory committees. Most of the potential participants were selected because they are part of a provincial infrastructure that serves Aboriginal people, such as Native Friendship Centres. The consultants used a nominated ("snowball") sampling approach, whereby potential key informants were asked to identify others who would be knowledgeable, insightful and willing to take part in an interview.

In total, 40 people from seven communities were contacted, often more than once.[141] Many potential key informants declined to participate because of workload demands; others were interested in participating, but ultimately were not available for their scheduled phone interview because their attention was turned to other pressing, last minute matters. Several individuals said their willingness to participate was largely because the consultants were Aboriginal themselves.

Of the 40 people initially contacted, the Aboriginal consultants completed key informant interviews with eight people in five communities: Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George, Prince Rupert and Nanaimo. All interviews except the one with the Victoria informant were conducted by telephone. Key informant interviews carried out in Prince George and Kelowna by MAG staff have supplemented our data set. The group of informants included a drug and alcohol counselor, the executive director of a youth services agency, the coordinator of a First Nations education program, two program directors for Native Friendship Centres, the assistant manager for a safe house, an Aboriginal youth worker and a Reconnect worker. Two of the informants represented the Aboriginal community on Community Action Teams, created specifically to deal with community concerns regarding the sexual exploitation of children and youth. All key informants were known or assumed to be of Aboriginal

ancestry. No one in the Métis community participated as a key informant; this is unfortunate, since the Métis have unique concerns that need to be recognized.

The interview was semi-structured, and guided by a 12-item, open-ended questionnaire.[142] The questionnaire was originally developed by MAG staff, following discussions with staff from the Aboriginal Health Division of the Ministry of Health. The PEERS consultants, in discussion with MAG staff, made some modifications to the questionnaire. In the interests of keeping the Aboriginal key informant data as consistent as possible, the Aboriginal consultant team used the questionnaire without making further modifications.

Findings

Selected demographic – Proportion of Aboriginal youth among sexually exploited youth

Key informants from several communities noted that, while the issue of sexually exploited youth was not new, only recently has the public been interested in discovering the seriousness and scope of this problem. Key informants' estimates of the proportion of sexually exploited youth who were Aboriginal varied considerably across regions/communities, from about 14 per cent to 60 per cent; key informants said they based their estimates on their own observations, their discussions with other service providers, and their review of existing survey research (available in one large urban region only). This degree of variability across regions reflects the varying proportions of Aboriginal people in different regions in the province; the differing estimates could also reflect our incomplete knowledge about the numbers of sexually exploited Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in the province. Several key informants also noted seasonal variation in the numbers of Aboriginal sexually exploited youth: in the summer it is easier to get rides to urban areas, and there is more street business and demand for drugs and sex. Nevertheless, based on key informants' statements, it is clear that Aboriginal youth are over-represented in the sexually exploited youth population.

Age of sexually exploited Aboriginal youth

Key informants generally were in agreement that the average age of sexually exploited Aboriginal youth was about 15. Moreover, nearly all informants noted that the age at which youth entered into the sex trade "kept getting younger and younger," and in several communities was as young as 11. Several informants also noted that the age at which youth entered into prostitution tended to correspond with the age at which many youth became dependent on/addicted to hard drugs (e.g., cocaine and heroin).[143]

Gender of sexually exploited Aboriginal youth

The vast majority of known or identified sexually exploited youth are girls. (As a reflection of the gender split, one key informant noted that since the safe house opened in her community three years ago, about 300 girls had "gone through" it, while only two boys had made use of it.) At the same time, key informants commented that many sexually exploited boys might be particularly "invisible" and choose not to disclose for fear of reprisals due to homophobia. Key informants also emphasized that boys still need services despite their relatively small numbers, since the risks associated with violence and homophobia are present regardless of gender. Unfortunately, only minimal services are available for males.

Where sexually exploited youth come from

Key informants believed that the youth came from "all over" the surrounding region: from reserves, rural communities and urban areas. Youth were attracted to the "big city lights," which they believed or hoped would give them jobs, excitement, and escape from the personal pain and family dysfunction in their home communities. Sexually exploited youth came from foster homes, group homes and their birth families; some were children of transient families who moved regularly from one urban centre to another.

Informants also noted that moving to the big city (a community of 15,000 would be viewed as a metropolis compared to a reserve community of several hundred people) generally offered youth very little in terms of housing, jobs or training opportunities, and friendships and support networks. In fact, moving to the "bright city lights" was a tremendous culture shock for youth who, after experiencing rejection and loneliness, often attempted to cope by adopting a tough street attitude and turning to street people for acceptance. All in all, this increased young people's vulnerability to sexual exploitation and entering the sex trade.

Venues for sexual exploitation

A variety of venues for child/youth sexual exploitation were identified, though most key informants believed the street was the most common location, followed by escort services. In one community, geographically unique as a northern port city, sexual exploitation was said to take place most often on commercial fish and freight boats: girls went out to exchange sex for money with the crew. In this community, the police haven't pressed charges because they can't tell who is involved. Another key informant living in a major urban centre observed that with modern communication technology (cell phones and pagers), young sex workers could be "anywhere"; the same technology also enabled them to "go underground" very quickly, making assessment of the situation extremely difficult. Finally, several informants described how some young (Aboriginal) prostitutes end up "doing the circuit"—being moved around and trafficked by pimps to Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto and the U.S.

Prevention - Risk factors for sexual exploitation

Nearly all key informants identified the same set of social and individual factors that put Aboriginal youth at risk for sexual exploitation. Factors were seen to be highly interrelated and often linked sequentially as a pathway to exploitation: childhood sexual and/or physical abuse (often at the hands of family members) drive youth toward alcohol and drugs and leaving home; youth then become substance-addicted. In order to pay for their habit, youth then turn to prostitution, since other means to earn sufficient money are all but non-existent for young people. Generational poverty and familial substance use were viewed as significant structural risk factors as well. As one key informant observed:

> Many have horrific backgrounds: abuse of all kinds, alcohol and drug use in the family, as well as poverty, to name a few. Many are abused by family members or suffer from FAS/E. They are already damaged by this intellectually; this, coupled with other pressures like school and family lifestyles, creates a very dangerous mix. They are more likely to get into drugs and alcohol to deal with their problems, which in turn increases their likelihood of turning to the streets to support their habits. Especially because cocaine and heroin are so available now.

Particular risk factors for Aboriginal youth

Key informants believed that Aboriginal youth were at higher risk for sexual exploitation than were non-Aboriginal youth because of the relatively higher prevalence of the above major risk factors (e.g., childhood sexual/physical abuse, substance use/addiction, violence, street involvement) affecting Aboriginal people and communities. Along these lines, one key informant reflected that:

> I don't think there is one of us who has not been touched by violence or alcohol or whatever. That makes them more vulnerable. You need a healthy community to help the kids get healthy.

This is also a time of major transition for many Aboriginal communities, which contributes to the vulnerability of Aboriginal children and youth. In discussing this point, one informant commented:

> I think it's because Aboriginal people are going through such major transitions in all areas of our lives. My understanding is that Aboriginal children, as well as other minority children, are actively being recruited because of the fact that we have the big issue of family stability. That's a big one for us. So, they're easier to recruit.

Key informants also spoke of the impact of the grim economic, employment and educational situation on Aboriginal youth and emphasized the relationship of these large-scale structural factors to the risk of sexual exploitation among Aboriginal youth. One key informant noted that unemployment on the reserves in the region ranged from 60 to 90 per cent. Given that young people would be competing with adults for jobs on reserves, youth unemployment rates would likely be at least that high, if not higher. Several informants spoke of the alarming Aboriginal youth drop-out rate (75 per cent in each of the indicated regions), which clearly contributes to their unemployment problems, because under-educated youth tend to lack employment-related and other life skills.

Key informants also believed that lack of self-esteem was a serious problem for many Aboriginal youth. Lack of self-

esteem and confidence could be both a consequence of and an antecedent to other risk factors. For example, one informant stated:

> They have low self-esteem, lack of roots; they don't know their language. These factors definitely affect their view of themselves: they have no identity. At least with selling sex they feel validated, a confirmation that they are needed, like, "at least someone wants to sleep with me."

In addition, Aboriginal youths' disconnection from their culture and communities was viewed as a significant risk factor for sexual exploitation. As these key informants noted:

> We have to look at how we can reconnect them to themselves, because a lot of them have been disconnected from their bodies, especially if they've been abused...and then [reconnect them] to the family, and then to the community.
>
> And then you've got the kids who have not identified themselves as being Aboriginal kids because they've grown up in foster homes and group homes. They don't know who they are. They are lost.
>
> Our kids are disconnected from their culture. They need to be connected; there is healing in this. Many of these high-risk youth are self-destructive and seem to have a death wish. It all starts with cultural self-hate.

Several informants echoed this concern regarding Aboriginal youths' sense of despair and self-destruction, culminating in a high risk of suicide among a disproportionate number of Aboriginal young people.

Finally, key informants spoke of the scarcity of resources and programs for Aboriginal youth—either on reserve, in their home communities or in urban areas. The scarcity of various educational, employment-related, addiction/recovery, counseling and other supportive services for Aboriginal youth was viewed as compounding the identified risk factors.

One key informant summed up the set of risk factors and precipitating conditions for sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth as follows:

> And then you've got the generational: kids who have seen that lifestyle or been through that stuff their whole lives; it's normal. I hate to say that, but it's seen as normal. Mom bringing tricks to the house, Mom's been working the streets all her life, maybe Grandma's done the same thing, so it's part of their lifestyle. So I think those areas: the generational; the kids in care; kids coming off the reserve; they're abused on the reserve and then they come off into the city and then adapt to the rough life and the community downtown. They're very naive; they don't know what's going on. They suddenly get sucked into the sex trade business, or recruited because they've been abused already at home. So, of course they're going to get into that lifestyle very quickly.

Recruitment processes

Informants indicated that youth were primarily recruited by pimps (and their workers) who sought out vulnerable-seeming young people in a variety of locations: bus depots, malls, schools, playgrounds, pool halls, etc. Pimps preyed on youths' evident unhappiness or loneliness and attempted to build trust and befriend them. In the process, pimps bought clothes for the youth, took them to parties, and introduced them to or supplied them with alcohol and/or drugs. Young people then would be told to "pay up," and working in the sex trade generally became the only option available to them. Informants emphasized that pimps and recruiters are very slick and skilled: they are "charismatic," treat youth like adults, create a sense of family for youth, and know the right lingo and ways to present themselves.

In addition to pimps, other prostitutes—both adult and youth—were identified as other recruiting agents, as were "older" men, who often presented themselves as "father figures" to vulnerable youth. Regardless of the recruiting agent, key informants suggested that the process or pattern for engaging Aboriginal youth in prostitution was highly similar.

Nearly all key informants discussed the link between childhood sexual abuse, heavy use of alcohol/drugs as a means to dull or forget the pain of abuse or family dysfunction, and then entry into prostitution in order to financially support the drug habit:

> It's hard to say they make a choice, in the sense that when you have been physically and sexually abused your choice is taken from you, and then you don't see a way out of it. And then you get into the drugs, and then you need the money to pay for the drugs, and so you sell your body, and it all seems to come in a pretty tight package.

It would appear that these are the prevailing risk factors for Aboriginal youth, although obviously these key informant data do not represent evidence of a causal relationship between addiction and youth prostitution.

Prevention-related resources/services for Aboriginal youth

Informants identified a variety of programs and resources in communities that aimed to support Aboriginal youth in different ways. Not surprisingly, the number and scope of these supports varied considerably across regions, as did the types of resources identified.[144] The majority of informants also noted that while most resources were offered by Aboriginal agencies and designed for Aboriginal youth, the services/programs in fact could be accessed by all young people in the community or region. Few if any resources were available to Aboriginal youth exclusively.

Across communities, the spectrum of prevention-related resources/supports available to Aboriginal youth, as identified by key informants, included:

- Life-skills training/education
- Alternative education programs
- Alcohol and drug counseling (though not youth-focused or Aboriginal-specific)
- Detox (not youth-focused, though some were geared to Aboriginal people)
- Teen talking program
- Peer counseling (not geared to sexually exploited youth)
- Drop-in program
- Recreation programs at the Friendship Centre (arts and crafts, cooking, gym, movies, and talks)

Again, it must be emphasized that not all of these resources existed in all communities. For example, one key informant who worked in an extremely poor and marginalized section of a northern city, expressed his frustration that no services for youth older than 16 existed in the area. There were no life skills courses, parenting resources, peer counseling, suicide prevention, or a drop-in/recreation centre for older youth. This was in contrast with the types of resources available to youth in other parts of town. Ironically, the informant's neighborhood was the area of the city in which perhaps the greatest amount of sex trade recruitment of Aboriginal youth took place.

Finally, one informant discussed an innovative means to providing prevention-related supports: his agency involved four high-risk Aboriginal youth on its Board of Directors. Moreover, youth were hired in part-time training positions any time resources permitted. This informant believed that these opportunities provided youth with "a possibility to turn their life around."

Prevention-related resources/services needed and issues in service delivery

In their discussion of existing prevention-related services and resources, informants also identified a number of service/support gaps and issues in service delivery. Several informants reiterated the important point that programming tended to focus on crisis management and intervention, at the expense of prevention-related services or supports. For example, given the above set of risk factors associated with youth sexual exploitation, it would make sense to allocate prevention-related resources to address core problems faced by vulnerable youth—in particular, childhood sexual abuse and substance use/addiction. Yet, as informants pointed out, these were the very areas where service gaps for youth were most evident and lamentable. As one informant stated:

> I think there's always crisis intervention, but no long-term services, meaning long-term sexual abuse and incest recovery houses. There are no recovery houses for youth in [this community] or anywhere in B.C. that I am aware of. There are some for adults and families, but not for children; we don't have youth treatment centres... And I say treatment because I think that alcohol and drug abuse are only symptoms of other problems and issues that these young people have. Meaning that a lot of them have

> been sexually abused— incestuous relationships at home—and they find it difficult to remain at home, and so they need to leave the community, come [here] and hide.

Informants believed there was a tremendous need for youth-focused addiction treatment services, including counseling and detox. Moreover, Aboriginal-focused or Aboriginal-specific treatment programs were necessary because of the historical origins of Aboriginal substance use, the generational nature of the problem and the cultural dimensions embedded in recommended treatment programs. According to one informant:

> Although there is a big movement for healing right now, we are sorely lacking in facilities; there are no real facilities for Aboriginal youth... I think you would have to start as young as 11 years old, because some of the addictions in our communities are starting that young... The bottom line is healing, that movement for healing of all generations is, in my opinion, a fundamental piece. Because in that healing process we are going to provide more support for our young people, who have been basically discombobulated from our communities and are feeling like they don't belong.

As one informant observed, Aboriginal treatment resources are important because Aboriginal youth "don't feel comfortable in non-Aboriginal programs." At the same time, informants noted that some Aboriginal youth—in particular those who were culturally disconnected—clearly preferred to be served by mainstream treatment (and other types of) programs. In summary, informants said that for services to be accessible to Aboriginal youth, there needs to be a variety of alcohol and drug treatment resources available in communities, and programs need to be more clearly geared to youth and their particular needs and circumstances.

In addition to sexual abuse and alcohol/drug treatment services, participants spoke at length about the need for community-based awareness and education for elementary-school children about the realities of child/youth sexual exploitation, alcohol/drug abuse and life on the streets.

Prevention efforts need to counter the glamorous image of prostitution and its material benefits that sometimes is presented to youth (often by other youth, including sex workers). As one informant stated:

> For some individuals coming off-reserves...it's peer pressure. Kids telling kids how great it is to always have money. They see two worlds: the nice shiny cars, clothes; and they can see what they're missing. It's kind of like the shiny world takes over, and they see how important money is, and that they need to get it. They have to get it from somewhere, and they see prostitution as fast and profitable. With the quick cash they can go out for lunch, buy nice things, and go back to the reserve showing people how well they're doing. This in turn reinforces this line of work to other youths on reserve, who see these successful, wealthy individuals who moved off reserve, thus perpetuating the cycle of selling sex.

To deconstruct these messages, young people needed education, positive role models, and opportunities to talk about the life choices they were contemplating. Along these lines, informants spoke about the prevailing invisibility and possible silencing of the topic of youth sexual exploitation within Aboriginal communities:

> We've never even discussed as a people that some of our women, great-grandmothers and grandmothers, actually were taken from our communities and prostituted in Vancouver. We don't talk about it and yet it's a historic fact... It needs to be discussed. You have to bring that awareness to the youth.

Informants noted the invisibility of the issue in mainstream society as well. For example, when street prostitution became quite visible in the business district of one medium-sized B.C. city, a large rally was held, which resulted in the problem being swept to poorer parts of town. Once the "problem" was out of sight, it was out of mind for the politicians who might have played a leadership role in addressing the issues.

Discussing the importance of education, informants shared several ideas about how to heighten community awareness,

including the use of popular theatre and bringing former youth sex workers into elementary and high schools to share their experiences and perspectives of sexual exploitation. The latter idea had been implemented by one informant with great success; it had a positive impact on both the young high school students and the former sex workers, whose sense of self-esteem and confidence rose considerably:

> Once, a couple of years ago, I went into the school and talked with the Grade 6 and 7 kids. I brought in three sexually exploited youth, who were there to tell the children about their experiences and answer any questions the kids may have. It was awesome. The kids were blown away when they realized that some of them might go through the same kinds of ordeals. They asked anonymous questions on a piece of paper. The three girls took this very seriously. They spent the whole day in the library, researching the questions so they could give the kids an idea of what they needed to know... These kids were learning about the effects of it before they even tried it... The school raved, the kids raved, and the three youths educated themselves as well. They learned a lot, like public speaking and speaking in front of an audience. I would like to see that happening on a regular basis in the community, but so far it's not.

Clearly, the idea of youth-to-youth information sharing based on lived experience has tremendous potential as a highly effective, while relatively inexpensive means of heightening awareness and promoting discussion in both schools and communities. Nevertheless, as the informants' comments suggest, implementing this strategy in a sustained way, resources would need to be committed to arranging and supporting sexually exploited youths' participation and to facilitating the subsequent discussions.

Informants made several key points about other issues in prevention-related service delivery. First, several participants noted that the success and demand for various supportive programs, coupled with limited resources, had resulted in long waiting lists for key services. Moreover, in some communities, funding cutbacks led to scaling back the hours of operation of popular youth-focused programs, which reduced the accessibility and effectiveness of these programs for youth.

Second, one informant emphasized that the effectiveness of prevention-related services would be enhanced by a greater degree of collaboration between youth-serving agencies and ministries (as well as different levels of government). Additional coordination and collaboration were especially important in efforts to engage in outreach with youth.

Third, one informant noted that service providers were challenged to ensure that various supportive and intervention services felt sufficiently safe to children and youth, given that—from their perspective—nearly all services came "with strings attached." In his words:

> There are no safe programs for them, because there are always conditions attached when you become a ward of the government. You have to be in by midnight, you have to go to school, you have to go to A and D counseling. Kids, when their lives are in crisis—how can they go to school and think that their life is well? They can't. They cannot go to school when they're dealing with sexual abuse and incest and alcohol and drugs. You cannot think; nobody can. The kids are not going to take those services. We have to change those services; we have to bring in different delivery services.

Finally, one informant discussed the importance of recognizing young people's varying capacities in program planning and delivery. This informant noted that a large number of the sexually exploited youth in her area were probably affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects, which had a significant effect on their capability to understand and benefit from certain approaches to prevention and crisis intervention. Programs and services thus needed to be flexible and geared to young people's varying skills and abilities; accordingly, program funding allocations needed to take young people's diversity into account.

Intervention – Risks specific to Aboriginal youth while in the sex trade

While informants were not asked to discuss the conditions or risks faced by youth in the sex trade, they were asked

whether they believed Aboriginal sexually exploited youth experienced specific or heightened risks. Nearly all key informants said Aboriginal youth faced an added risk of violence at the hands of racist johns. For example, one informant told the following story:

> There was a guy in Vancouver who literally picked up women and got them so drunk that he basically used alcohol poisoning to kill them. And there were a number of street women in the sex trade whom he did this to. He literally saturated them with alcohol... Whatever his issues with Aboriginal women, that's the way he took it out.

Informants also spoke of the risk of kidnapping, whereby (Aboriginal) sexually exploited youth were drugged by pimps and then transported to different areas, including cities in the U.S.; they suggested that kidnapping youth sex workers was on the rise, though it is unclear whether Aboriginal youth were perceived to be at particular risk. Finally, one key informant noted that work in the sex trade is dangerous for anyone—male or female, Aboriginal or not—and that risks of violence from johns, pimps and even other sex workers are faced daily.

Intervention-related resources/services for Aboriginal youth

As we noted, informants were not asked to identify existing resources that were specifically focused on "crisis-intervention." Thus, in their discussion of available support resources for Aboriginal youth in general and sexually exploited Aboriginal youth in particular, they tended to speak of all available resources. Moreover, in their discussion of these resources, it is clear that some services, such as alcohol/drug counseling and detox, were conceptualized as being both prevention-related and crisis intervention-related. This makes sense, given the context of the informants' discussion, and illustrates how distinctions between service categories are blurred.

Besides alcohol and drug treatment programs, the other main type of crisis-intervention resource key informants identified in two B.C. communities/regions was safe houses. In one of these communities, the safe house was a six-bed facility affiliated with the Friendship Centre, and had served about 300 youth since opening three years ago. This facility, while geared to Aboriginal youth, was available to all young people in the region. In the other community/region, the informant said the safe house was not geared to Aboriginal youth.

Other intervention-related resources identified included:

- a Reconnect program, which offered sex workers condoms and "kept an eye on the girls";
- a needle-exchange program;
- a "bad date" bulletin board (posted at the needle-exchange program);
- a shelter where male youth were sometimes placed as a last resort;
- a shelter where female youth were sometimes placed as a last resort; and
- a two-bed facility for young (sexually exploited) Aboriginal women deemed to be at very high risk of death (e.g., via heavy intra-venous drug use or unprotected sex with HIV-positive men).

Only one key informant discussed these programs, available in a northern urban centre.

Intervention-related resources/services needed and issues in service delivery

As we've said, many informants expressed a pressing need for a comprehensive support network for sexually exploited youth. Informants working in areas that did not have a safe house stressed the need for one; one key informant noted that this need had been voiced by sexually exploited youth themselves at a community meeting called to identify supports needed to address the issues. The need for (Aboriginal) youth-focused alcohol and drug treatment programs also arose in the context of crisis intervention-related resources.

Several informants noted that, while some crisis intervention-related resources existed in their community, programs generally were not established specifically to serve sexually exploited youth, let alone Aboriginal sexually exploited youth. Yet these young people often did not feel safe or comfortable participating in programs aimed more broadly at youth; existing programs thus weren't really tailored to the particular needs of sexually exploited youth.

Finally, one key informant voiced concern that practitioners had only 72 hours to "work with" young people who had entered a safe house. This often was not enough time to address the young person's issues, resolve the crisis, and/or facilitate exiting support. Along similar lines, this informant observed that the existing justice system did not adequately serve sexually abused or sexually exploited children and youth; often, the system re-victimized them following disclosure of abuse or exploitation, and further disconnected them from their family and community.

Exiting - Barriers to exiting

Informants were not asked any specific questions about exiting issues. Still, several identified social and structural barriers to exiting, including negative societal attitudes toward prostitutes that impede sexually exploited youths' help-seeking behaviour; the economic hardships that youth would face should they exit; their lack of alternate job skills; and their strong fear of retaliation from pimps which, coupled with the "red tape" and lack of "streamlined services" in the justice system, greatly diminishes the likelihood that sexually exploited youth would choose to come forward and press charges. As these informants noted:

> The reality is: how many of these young people can buy their way out? Virtually none of them. And the only way they can technically buy their way out is to go to the law. And many of them are just not willing to do that. Many of them have such a great fear of the pimps. Most of them are brutal.

> [Youth] have said, "It's really hard, because you get used to the money... you get used to some sort of income." And when they exit, or try to exit, and then they go on social assistance, and they have nothing, the pull to get back in is really strong. Despite all the hassles they go through. They also don't have the job skills.

Exiting-related resources/services needed and issues in service delivery

As we noted, informants did not discuss "exiting-specific" programs and resources; nor did it appear, from their discussion of existing and needed community-based resources, that a distinction between prevention, crisis-intervention and exiting resources was conceptually useful.

Several informants did note, however, that for youth who were thinking about exiting, it was important for them to interact with former youth sex workers; exiting support strategies that involved peer support were viewed as extremely important, even though peer support programs existed in only two communities.

In addition, one informant proposed that an Aboriginal healing camp, currently in existence on a seasonal basis for adults and families with addiction issues, would be highly beneficial for sexually exploited youth. Through this camp, individuals and families engage in a variety of traditional activities like hunting and fishing; the experience provides youth with an appreciation of lifestyles other than addiction and violence.

Principles for Aboriginal youth programming

As a means of concluding their interviews, key informants were asked to identify any principles that should be followed in developing and implementing Aboriginal youth programming. Informants articulated a number of guiding principles and, interestingly, there was considerable congruity in the participants' responses. These principles may be described as follows:

- Commitment to youth involvement in service planning and delivery
- Emphasis on cultural reconnection and renewal
- Focus on education and skill development as strategies for prevention
- Commitment to peer support
- Commitment to collaborative, multi-sectoral planning.

Commitment to youth involvement in service planning and delivery

Nearly all informants emphasized the importance of ensuring that youth who were most affected by the issues be centrally involved in program/service planning and delivery. Young people's experiences need to be heard: the factors and conditions that precipitated their sexual exploitation; sexual exploitation and working in the sex trade; attempting to access existing services; receiving service; and attempting to

exit and/or exiting. Their experiences need to inform all program, service and policy planning in this area. In addition, youth should sit on, and have a meaningful role in, provincial and community-based planning and implementation committees. It also was pointed out that Aboriginal sexually exploited youth may not be forthcoming because they are a highly invisible population; thus it may be essential to engage in outreach and "go to the people" to identify the issues and solutions. The informants' message was strong and clear: Learn from the youth themselves about their experiences accessing services, what has worked or not worked, and why.

Emphasis on cultural reconnection and renewal

Several informants spoke of the value of cultural renewal for Aboriginal youth. (Re-)learning and practicing traditional Aboriginal ways are increasingly becoming the hallmarks of successful approaches to individual, family and community healing. Moreover, a growing number of Aboriginal youth are seeking stronger connections with their culture.

Focus on education and skill development as strategies for prevention

Informants felt strongly that in order for prevention efforts to be successful with Aboriginal children and youth, young people needed "healthier tools in their tool boxes," and, in particular, they needed education and life-skills training and support. Enhancing youths' "toolboxes" also required detailed knowledge of their individual strengths, capacities and challenges.

Commitment to peer support

In keeping with the principle of youth involvement in service planning, informants believed that youth-to-youth counseling and peer support were extremely valuable approaches for Aboriginal youth programming. For sexually exploited youth, peer support appeared especially important during the exiting process.

Commitment to collaborative, multi-sectoral planning

Finally, informants voiced the need for government to work more collaboratively, across all sectors and levels, and in meaningful partnership with (Aboriginal) communities. Even within communities, there is a need for agencies and community members to work more collaboratively.

Conclusion

Aboriginal communities are increasingly concerned about the sexual exploitation of their children and youth, since Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in this population of young people. Generally speaking, the lived reality of most Aboriginal children and youth is very different from that of non-Aboriginal children. Largely as a legacy of residential schools and their devastating impact on Aboriginal people's self-identity, dysfunctional family systems transmit dysfunctional individual behaviours in children and youth. Many youth are in pain and will become involved in substance use and addiction. Some youth become homeless and end up as street youth. Some experience a sense of despair and hopelessness and are at risk for suicide. Abnormal behaviours tend to become normalized. These issues need to be addressed by Aboriginal communities with government help.

One key finding of this project was the increasingly younger age at which children first become involved in the sex trade. This finding assumes a child protection response. Yet some of the Aboriginal children and youth involved in the sex trade are in foster care and group homes. So why are they on the street engaged in this activity, if their basic needs are met and they are safe? In our view, a child protection response that includes the Aboriginal community can make the difference.

The Child, Family and Community Service Act mandates having supports in place before removal of a child. It mandates the involvement of the Aboriginal community in a variety of contexts. This legislation can provide a helpful framework if implemented in the spirit of the recommendations that came from the Aboriginal consultation report *Liberating Our Children: Liberating our Nations*. What these up-front services look like will vary, both across diverse Aboriginal communities and in relation to mainstream approaches.

Physical and sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and youth are serious crimes. They need to be treated as such, both by government and by the general public; johns

and pimps are culpable and need to be held accountable. Any framework for action that does not reflect this is dealing with only half the picture. Further, it is critical that the Aboriginal community is included in any justice-related responses to the issue. Protocol agreements with Aboriginal communities could be developed, and Aboriginal feedback on government initiatives would be useful. It is our belief that a partnership approach can create long-lasting change. This approach would probably have the added benefit of reconnecting individuals and families to their Aboriginal community.

We must also recognize that there are no quick fixes to dealing effectively with the underlying issues that contribute to Aboriginal youths' sexual exploitation. These issues are multi-dimensional and often generational. To be effective, models of service will need to reflect this.

As an initial step in addressing the issues, Aboriginal communities need adequate resources to find out what is happening in the lives of their children and youth. Aboriginal people need to closely examine their own communities and their strengths and weaknesses. Thus a primary recommendation of this report is that adequate funding be made available to Aboriginal communities for in-depth research on the unique issues for Aboriginal sexually exploited youth in terms of prevention, intervention, and exiting. Participatory action research can provide opportunities for Aboriginal communities to have ownership over research and program-planning processes, collect meaningful data, and identify a range of solutions that address the community's problems in a relevant, holistic manner.

The key informants for this project provided detailed accounts of the particular risks that Aboriginal youth experienced in relation to sexual exploitation, and the types of supports, services and resources needed to address these risks and assist youth who already had involvement in the sex trade. A number of informants developed their ideas about needed resources into proposals which they have submitted to various branches and levels of government, requesting funding for projects and programs to support at-risk and/or sexually exploited youth. Informants' ideas and insights are deeply grounded in their experience of living and working in their communities. Considering their experiential knowledge, we have reason to expect that the projects they propose will be effective in addressing Aboriginal youths' needs. We should therefore support these proposals and others grounded in the guiding principles this project identified for Aboriginal youth programming: commitment to youth involvement in service planning and delivery; emphasis on cultural reconnection and renewal; focus on education and skill development as strategies for prevention; commitment to peer support; and commitment to collaborative, multi-sectoral planning.

As a parting note, the project's key informants generally felt that what they had to say was not new information; however, they thought a new response was needed from government to what the Aboriginal community has been saying for a very long time. The Aboriginal consultants hope this report adds strength to the voices that have gone before us.

11. SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE AND KEY INFORMANT FINDINGS WITH ADMS' INTEGRATED PLAN

Overall, our review of the research literature and the findings from our key informant interviews were quite congruent with the Integrated Plan of the ADMs' Prostitution Working Group for addressing child and youth sexual exploitation. The plan's use of a "case management" model and clustering programs and services into stages is generally in keeping with the integrated service-delivery model developed through a consultative process by PEERS, outlined in our literature review.

However, as both the literature and our key informants have indicated, it may be more meaningful to conceptualize certain types of prevention strategies or supports, such as alcohol and drug counseling, detox, and counseling for historical abuse, and supports relating to crisis intervention and exiting. While the Integrated Plan recognizes that clustering services into three stages of responses—prevention, immediate supports/crisis intervention, and exiting—may result in overlap, our literature review and key-informant data emphasized this point even more.

Both the literature and the key informant data spoke to major gaps in existing knowledge—areas where additional research

is required. This is consistent with the Integrated Plan's call to expand our knowledge base about the sexual exploitation of particular groups of young people, including Aboriginal youth, pregnant/parenting youth and youth with FAS/E. However, key informants strongly urged that future research projects employ a participatory action research approach—one that enables Aboriginal communities to direct the focus of the inquiry and link the research with action planning to address the emergent issues.

The review of the literature also clearly demonstrated the need for additional knowledge about the evaluation of services and programs designed to address the sexual exploitation of youth in the areas of prevention, intervention and exiting. The Integrated Plan's call for improvements in existing programs, policies and initiatives, and new service responses will be most effective if it is informed by the results of systematic evaluation of programs and responses; thus we recommend that allocating resources toward program evaluation become an essential part of the Integrated Plan.

Integrated case management, identified by the plan as a means of making service providers' response to sexually exploited youth more effective, reflects the Aboriginal key informants' call for better collaboration among service providers (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, both government and community-based). This point also corresponds to one of the emerging principles key informants discussed for youth programming—the commitment to collaborative, multi-sectoral planning—and to discussion in the literature of the value of a "youth-services approach."

The recognition that removing barriers to young people's access to social supports is instrumental to addressing youth sexual exploitation, as recognized by the Integrated Plan, is reinforced by our key informant data and findings from the literature. More specifically, this point echoes the literature's discussion of the structural antecedents to sexual exploitation, and the key informants' discussion of the particular risks for sexual exploitation faced by Aboriginal youth (risks associated with high rates of poverty, unemployment and homelessness).

In identifying new service responses to youth sexual exploitation, the Integrated Plan emphasizes the need to address the variables associated with entry into prostitution, such as alcohol and drug addiction, failure to remain in school, and childhood abuse; this emphasis was strongly echoed in the literature and by key informants. Arguably, however, key informants were even more emphatic than the Integrated Plan about the urgency for enhanced programming in youth-oriented/youth-specific alcohol and drug treatment and sexual abuse counseling. Informants believed that acting on the creation and/or augmentation of programming in these areas was absolutely essential, given the relative scarcity of youth-specific alcohol and drug treatment services, and the complete absence of youth-focused detox and residential programs in the province—despite evidence that youth do not feel safe or comfortable using "adult" detox services. Both the literature and key-informant data suggest that sexual-abuse counseling needs to be viewed as part of the Integrated Plan in all three "stages"—prevention, intervention and exiting. Furthermore, our key-informant data suggest that the creation of these types of supports (historical sexual-abuse counseling; youth-oriented alcohol and drug treatment) should be a core component of the Integrated Plan in its initial year.

The literature and key informants emphasized the importance of peer support in addressing youth sexual exploitation, and it is a welcome aspect of the Integrated Plan. As discussed in our review of the literature, some models exist for peer support (e.g., PEERS, PACE), although formal evaluation of these resources would result in a better understanding of what aspects of these programs are most successful, and the mechanisms by which peer support is effective. Our key informant data revealed other innovative approaches to youth-to-youth programming, including bringing former youth sex workers into schools to discuss their life experiences.

Finally, one major theme in the literature is not central to, or even evident in, the Integrated Plan: the need for youth involvement in service planning and delivery. This deficiency raises the question: How will the plan's development and implementation, and the services it identifies, incorporate youth involvement? Clearly, our Aboriginal key informants and the research literature, including the youth consultations, recommend young people's meaningful participation and leadership in addressing the problem of youth sexual exploitation.

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Appendix A

COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM CONSULTATIONS DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Are there Aboriginal youth in your community who are sexually exploited? What is the proportion of Aboriginal youth among sexually exploited youth?
2. What is the average age of sexually exploited Aboriginal youth in your community?
3. What gender are most of the sexually exploited Aboriginal youth?
4. Do you know where most of these youth come from (your community or another; a reserve; or another province, etc.)?
5. What are some of the venues or situations where these youth are sexually exploited (streets, indoor venues like escort agencies, private residences, parks, etc.)?
6. Are Aboriginal youth being actively recruited into the sex trade? Where? How?
7. Do you think that Aboriginal youth are more at risk than other youth for sexual exploitation?
8. Are there any specific risks that Aboriginal youth face, compared with other youth, while in the sex trade (i.e., violence)?
9. Which services/supports that are specifically designed for Aboriginal youth do you currently have in your community? Do Aboriginal youth access these services?
10. What are some of the key concerns or issues you feel are important with regard to current Aboriginal youth programming and/or delivery?
11. What are some of the barriers (e.g. to education, employment, adequate housing, long-term goals, hopes for the future, etc.) that you believe Aboriginal youth face in your community?
12. In your opinion, are there any key principles for Aboriginal youth programming that should be followed (e.g. right to self-government, empowerment, utilize Aboriginal agencies to deliver services, etc.)

Notes

1 R. Badgley, 1984

2 C. Earls & H. David, 1989b

3 Earls and David, 1986b

4 Out from the Shadows, 1998b

5 J. Lowman, 1989; CRD, 1997)

6 1987, 1991

7 e.g., CRD Consultation, Victoria, 1997

8 B. Copeland & D. Rutman, 1996; A. Streissguth, J. Aase, J. Kogan & F. Bookstein, 1996

9 A. Brannigan & J. Fleischman, 1989; R. Edney, 1990; Out from the Shadows, 1998b; S. Scott, 1998

10 J. Ennew, K. Gopal, J. Heeran & H. Montgomery, 1996

11 Department of Justice, 1989: 100

12 Federal/Provincial Territorial Working Group on Prostitution, 1998

13 City of Burnaby, 1998

14 1989

15 CRD, 1997

16 1989, 1991

17 Badgley, 1984

18 Out from the Shadows, 1998b:10

19 Youth Advocate Program International, 1998:10

20 1984

21 Scott, 1998

22 e.g., Lowman, 1989

23 1984

24 L. Wolff & D. Geissel, 1994: 19

25 J. Pitts, 1997

26 Lowman, 1991

27 Pitts, 1997

28 Lowman, 1987

29 Edney, 1990

30 Gray, 1973; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

31 p. 184

32 J. James and J. Meyerding, 1997, p. 40

33 M. Silbert & A. Pines, 1982a

34 Their findings have been published in various forms over the past few years, including a recently published book (J. Hagan & B. McCarthy, 1998).

35 Silbert & Pines, 1982b; C. Bagley & L. Young, 1987; Earls & David, 1990

36 e.g., D. Finkelhor & A. Browne, 1988

37 Bagley, 1997; D. Boyer & J. James, 1983

38 PEERS, 1997

39 e.g., Silbert & Pines, 1982b; Lowman, 1987

40 CRD, 1997; Earls & David, 1989b; K.Wurzbacher, E. Evans & E. Moore, 1991

41 e.g., Weisberg, 1985; Jesson, 1993

42 1982d

43 1988, 1990

44 Lowman, 1987, p. 103

45 In a recent discussion of this question, Brannigan maintains the overall evidence is contradictory and inconsistent (Brannigan & Van Brunschot, 1997). While they found a higher level of sexual abuse (and higher levels of a number of other individual background factors) among females involved in street prostitution compared to a group of college students, analysis did not identify sexual abuse as a predictor of membership in the group of those involved in prostitution.

46 Silbert & Pines, 1982a

47 Bagley & Young, 1987

48 Bagley & Young, 1987; Silbert & Pines, 1982a

49 Bagley & Young, 1987; S. Nadon, C. Koverola & E. Schludermann, 1998; Silbert & Pines, 1982a

50 Brannigan & Van Brunschot, 1997

51 Silbert & Pines, 1982a

52 Bagley & Young, 1987

53 Nadon, Koverola & Schludermann, 1998

54 Badgley, 1984

55 CRD, 1997; Earls & David, 1989a, 1990; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

56 p. 351

57 Badgley, 1984; H. Bell & C. Todd, 1998; CRD, 1997; V. Price, 1989; G. Yates, R. MacKenzie, J. Pennbridge & A. Swofford, 1991

58 CRD, 1997; Yates et al., 1991

59 Out from the Shadows, 1998b: 8

60 Badgley, 1984; D. Gray, 1973; Silbert & Pines, 1982; D. Weisberg, 1985

61 Price, 1989; Hagan & McCarthy, 1998

62 Whitbeck & Simons (cited in Hagan & McCarthy, 1998)

63 Badgley, 1984; Silbert & Pines, 1982a; E. Van Brunschot, 1995

64 1984, 1988, 1997, 1985

65 McCarthy, 1995

66 Hagan and McCarthy, 1995, 1998

67 D.M. Allen, 1980; Earls & David, 1989a

68 G. Kruks, 1991; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

69 J. Cates, 1989; Weisberg, 1985

70 see Shaw & Butler, 1998

71 e.g., Earls & David, 1989b; Scott, 1998; Silbert & Pines, 1982a

72 CRD, 1997; Scott, 1998

73 1982a

74 Out from the Shadows, 1998b

75 CRD, 1997; Scott, 1998; Silbert & Pines, 1982a

76 Badgley, 1984; Silbert & Pines, 1982a

77 Silbert & Pines, 1982a

78 Badgley, 1984

79 Scott, 1998; Silbert & Pines, 1982a

80 Out from the Shadows, 1998b

81 1998b

82 Allen, 1980; 1994; Earls & David, 1989; Out from the Shadows, 1998b; Yates et al., 1991

83 CRD, 1997; Yates et al., 1991

84 Silbert & Pines, 1982a; CRD, 1997

85 Scott, 1998

86 Out from the Shadows, 1998b

87 J. Lowman & L. Fraser, 1995

88 Badgley, 1984; CRD, 1997; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

89 p.11

90 e.g., Johnson et al, 1996; Simon et al, 1994; Sullivan, 1996

91 Youth Advocate Program International, 1998

92 Yates et al., 1991; Youth Advocate Program International, 1998

93 Yates et al., 1991

94 e.g., CRD, 1997

95 F. Mathews, 1987

96 CRD, 1997; Youth Advocate Program International, 1998

97 T. Johnson, J. Aschkenasy, M. Herbers & S. Gillenwater, 1996, p.308

98 Badgley, 1984; Earls & David, 1989a; Out from the Shadows, 1998b; Price, 1989; Shaw & Butler, 1998; Van Brunschot, 1995

99 Badgley, 1984; Van Brunschot, 1995

100 Mathews, 1987; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

101 British Columbia (MAG), 1996

102 Badgley, 1984; CRD, 1997

103 as cited by Van Brunschot

104 1998a

105 Badgley, 1984

106 Badgley, 1984; Price, 1989

107 Badgley, 1984; British Columbia, 1996; City of Burnaby, 1998; Federal/Provincial Territorial Working Group on Prostitution, 1998; Out from the Shadows, 1998b; Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, 1985; Youth Advocate Program International, 1998

108 Department of Justice, 1989; Lowman, 1987, 1991

109 Department of Justice, 1989

110 Department of Justice, 1989

111 Lowman, 1989, p.145

112 e.g., City of Burnaby, 1998; Federal/Provincial Territorial Working Group on Prostitution, 1998

113 End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Traffic in Children for Sexual Purposes, 1999

114 Youth Advocate Program International, 1998

115 cited in Youth Advocate Program International, 1998

116 K. Daum, 1998

117 1998b

118 *Recommendations by Ministry,* ADMs' Committee on Prostitution and Sexually Exploited Youth (Draft Report), October 27, 1998, and *Recommendations from Municipal Reports, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Report Declaration for Action,* ADMs' Committee on Prostitution and Sexually Exploited Youth, 21 January 1999

119 Price, 1989: 88

120 Wurzbacher et al., 1991

121 E. Schroeder, 1993

122 PEERS, 1997; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

123 Out from the Shadows, 1998b; PEERS, 1997; Shaw & Butler, 1998

124 Shaw & Butler, p. 192

125 J. Green, S. Mulroy & M. O'Neill, 1997

126 J. Faugier & M. Sargeant, 1997

127 PEERS, 1997; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

128 Out from the Shadows, 1998b

129 CBC Radio *Early Edition,* October 5, 1998

130 e.g., CRD, 1997; PEERS, 1997; Out from the Shadows, 1998b

131 e.g., Out from the Shadows, 1998a

132 PEERS, 1997

133 n=34

134 Out from the Shadows, 1998b; CRD, 1997

135 Out from the Shadows, 1998a, 1998b; CRD, 1997

136 This segment of the report is guided by the voices of Aboriginal researchers attempting to provide a glimpse at the complexities from an Aboriginal perspective; provide a vehicle through which the voices of Aboriginal people can be heard; demonstrate the issues as voiced in both world views; add to the discourse and debate on the issue; and provide a youth voice and perspective. Because this issue is a lived experience among our families, the Aboriginal authors of this report place themselves within the research.

137 Mercredi, O & Turpel, M.E. (1993). *In the Rapids*. Toronto: Viking Ovide Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel, *In the Rapids* 1993, Penguin Books Canada Ltd. Ontario: Canada, p.3

138 Bagley & Young, 1987; CRD, 1997; Ennew et al, 1996; Lowman, 1991

139 R. Ratner, 1995; 1996

140 The term "Aboriginal" is inclusive of First Nations, Metis and Inuit.

141 To minimize duplication and maximize a cooperative effort, it was agreed that the Aboriginal team would not conduct interviews with informants who had already participated in a comparable interview with Ministry of Attorney General staff. Instead, transcribed interviews would be shared between the two project teams. To date, the Aboriginal team has received two interviews from MAG staff, one from Kelowna and one from Prince George; in turn, transcripts of all interviews carried out by the Aboriginal team have been faxed to MAG staff. Due to time constraints, the Aboriginal team did not attempt to contact anyone in Whistler.

142 See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.

143 See discussion of relationship between addiction and youth prostitution in Prevention section.

144 The reader is reminded that informants were asked open-ended questions regarding the services/supports designed for Aboriginal youth that were available in the community. They were not given a standardized checklist of services and asked whether particular ones existed in the area. Moreover, they were not asked to distinguish between and discuss separately the "prevention", "crisis intervention" and "exiting" supports available. Consequently, it is possible that key informants could identify different types of resources depending on their conceptualization of "supportive resources" for at-risk Aboriginal youth.